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TRUE LOVE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

BY

JAMES EDWARDS.

DETROIT:
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1881.

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Let me sigh at the same time my sufferings and my pleasures.—
MONTESQUIEU; *Temple of Gnide.*

That death's unnatural that kills for loving.—SHAKESPERE; *Othello.*

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TRUE LOVE

AND ITS

CONSEQUENCES.

CHAPTER FIRST.

The *Boulevard des Italiens* and its frequenters.—Lucien de Varny; his character and relations.—Uncle and Nephew.—A curious book.—Lucien accepts an office; causes of his decision.—From Paris to Naples.—The broken axle-tree.—The *Arms of England* Inn.

No one who frequented the *Boulevard des Italiens* was unacquainted with Lucien de Varny. Of all those who made its small arcades and the passage to the Opera their daily promenade, he was certainly the most regular; while the frequenters of those places where the fashionable idlers of Paris assembled together, were always ready to salute him whenever they met him, which was generally three or four times a day.

A kind of occult comradery unites all those promenaders who compose what one of the most

remarkable French novelists—Henry Murger—calls, in his picturesque language, the *Boheme de Paris*, men of all kinds and of all conditions, poor and rich, noble and plebeian, journalists and scions of family, artists and dandies, amongst whom are found a great number of swindlers with curled moustaches, who live by means best known to themselves.

Some of them have eaten up their patrimony, the majority never possessed any; however, all dine every day, often take their supper, and sleep somewhere—at home if they have one, if not, elsewhere. They do nothing or very little; their principal business is to walk, coming one cannot say whence, going to the devil if he wants them.

Amongst the number of those people whom we would willingly call sharpers,—if the French language has not become too polite to call anything by its proper name,—we count some who have practiced this easy trade since the First Empire. They gayly wear their gray whiskers cut in the latest style; they set their hats on one ear, stretch out their legs and smartly exchange a smile or a glance with the ladies who turn the corner of *rues* Lepelletier and Grange Bateliere, these two opera boundaries.

Not that amongst those citizen-like condottieri of our very constitutional monarchy, (1) we cannot find some very good young men full of loyalty; but, to speak truly, they are not in the majority in this *Boheme*, which would lose its originality if it lost its doubtful virtue. Lucien de Varny had, amongst those people, a remarkable number of fellows with whom he shook hands. He would, however, have been much perplexed to tell how he became acquainted with them; but Paris is certainly the city where little attention is paid to this sort of thing: this is, without any doubt, the cause of the indifference which every one there exhibits for the origin of his acquaintanceships.

Regularly, no matter what the weather or season, Lucien walked,—on the boulevard if the weather was fine, in the arcades, if it was raining, from two to six o'clock in the afternoon, and very often in the evening till midnight. He did not himself pay any attention to the motive which brought him so constantly to this place, but he found a singular pleasure in leading a life that could produce nothing for him.

With his hands philosophically hidden in the pockets of his Cossack pantaloons, smoking

1. Epoch of the reign of H. M. Louis Philippe I.

a cigar, and leaving his eyes and thoughts to float at random, he appeared to be the most sedate and thoughtful person in the world.

But a few years had elapsed since the death of his father and mother, leaving him heir to a fortune of six thousand francs per annum, upon which he lived.

With such a sum, when one does not work, and especially—as was the case with Lucien—when a taste for elegant things and for distinction has been acquired, it could not be expected that he would always succeed in making his income last till the end of the year. Indeed, Lucien, who had never learned to count, would often have found himself perplexed if he had not an honest uncle, living in the suburb of Saint-Germain, who came to his rescue and paid his deficits with a devotedness of which the young man kept a memorandum in his heart.

This uncle, peer of France during the revolution of July, tired of living alone in his de Varennes street *hotel*, had often urged Lucien to come and live with him; but as Lucien could not bring himself to cross the bridges, he had ever refused him under a thousand excuses. The good-natured man, already old and very rich,

was embarrassed how to expend his rents which had accumulated in his notary's hands, and to kill time, spent his days running to the past, present, and expectant future Minister. He knew better than the office boys all the corridors of all the ministeries, and could call the bailiffs by their own names, which gave to him a certain kind of authority in the eyes of common petitioners.

At such a trade, he had gained a certain influence, into which the habit folks had of seeing him entered as a great half: his title did the rest.

M. de Villaines would have much liked to use this influence in his nephew's favor, whom he was anxious to put in an administrative or political career; but on that subject Lucien had never shown himself less unmanageable than on the one previously mentioned.

Neither did marriage enter into Lucien's feelings; so that in the calm and easy existence of M. de Villaines the young man's prospect was the dark side, the black horizon point where the clouds were heaping up. Sometimes he spoke of this to his daughter, whom he had married to M. d'Astouans, referendary councilor to the Court of Accounts.

Madame d'Astouans was sincerely fond of

her cousin, who paid her back heartily and who frequently saw her, being in the vicinity, for she lived in the *rue* Basse-du-Rampart and he, in the Neuve-des-Mathurins. It was even said that if Lucien wanted to submit himself to the tastes of his uncle, his cousin Henriette would have became Madame de Varny, and he was much blamed by a certain circle of people for having let slip an occasion to solidly establish his fortune. But those ideas did not agree with Lucien's pride, which was repugnant to such kinds of speculation, and he would not engage in anything that was against his conscience or honor, even with the hope of obtaining all the treasures of Peru. Neither had he ever taken the least trouble to divert towards an illegitimate love the tender friendship that his charming cousin evinced for him. On the contrary, he had sincerely congratulated M. de Villaines for having chosen M. d'Astouans for his son-in-law.

Lucien possessed, except one, all the qualities which command success; without being a handsome man, he was happy enough to please at first sight; his agreeable manners, and his uniform temper completed what the physiognomy had commenced; he had sufficient wit to

converse with all persons without wounding the feelings of any; intelligence enough to understand what he did not learn. Regarding his courage, he had proved in several instances that he was not devoid of it, and the ladies, who are the best judges in such matters, were not unappreciative: so he was loved generally without having given any sign that he would take advantage of it. He was in all respects, very much reserved; but we must confess that aside from feeling of the heart, his discretion was nothing else than indifference; he would forget the day after what had been told him the eve before.

When to these qualities we join the custom to never refuse a pleasure party, a country jaunt, or a supper, to have always fifty or a hundred francs to throw into the purse which a good adventure or carnival has emptied, to cheerily support the pleasantries of the most dreary desserts and hear without impatience the most extravagant stories, should they be as long as those of Schereazade, he could not but have friends. With a little energy, Lucien would have been able to make steps of all the shoulders that surrounded him, and there is no saying to what point he would have reached; but this was exactly the quality of which he was deficient.

And however, strange as it may appear in the midst of such an existence, Lucien was not known as having a frivolous mind. Some grave personages with whom he had talked of serious matters and of certain questions then current, were pleased to discover in him a great intelligence of things and a singular facility of adapting himself to the rudiments of science and to the solution of problems that he had least studied. In these circumstances, he developed great resources, we should say spontaneously, and he gave proof of a ready wit rightly helped by a wonderful flow of language. We must also state that those faculties were strongly aided by a remarkable memory; it was sufficient for him to read a book or to hear a demonstration to retain the substance of it, and occasionally, the full recollection of these readings and conversations would come to him. But Lucien did not like discussions, and, oftentimes, he resigned himself indifferently to them, and this indifference was to his intellect what the shell is to the turtle, an invulnerable armor.

When M. de Villaines met his nephew either on the boulevard or at a ball, he seized him by the arm and submitted him to a conversation that Lucien endured with a marvelous resignation.

"Let us see, Lucien," said the uncle, "what have you done since I saw you?"

"I have been walking," said the nephew.

"That is not an occupation!"

"It is a more serious one than you think; it takes up all my time."

"You will never change then?"

"I am too much afraid to lose."

"Have you considered the proposition I have made to you? The minister is very much inclined in your favor, and, by my influence, you can have your name to-morrow in the columns of the *Moniteur*, if you so desire."

"God preserve me from it! I prefer to be elsewhere; here, for example."

"But consider, Lucien, that you may be able to reach *everything*."

"I prefer to reach nothing; this comes almost to the same thing and gives less trouble."

"Undoubtedly; but when age will come, you will perhaps think as I do."

"Then I will act like you. Let us wait till that time. Besides you know; that if I accepted an office I should try to perform its duties better than anybody else. I have some principles on that subject that nothing can vary; I don't know if I am inspired by them

through a consciousness of duty or by self-love, but I must say that I have them. Now, to strictly fulfil such a charge, no matter of how little importance, would require too much time and care. That is why I do not like to do anything."

"You have no end in view, then? Nothing you wish to gain?"

"What is the use, when we have not had any beginning?"

"Be reasonable, my friend."

"It is because I have too much sense that I am nothing. Fools work; the wise look on!"

"You might get married, at least."

"What necessity is there for two to get weary? Is there not already too much of this lonely *ennui?*"

"But, my friend, you would never become tired of a woman whom you loved."

"That would be worse again. I have still my own theory of love. I would shrink from a wife that I did not love, and if I loved her, this affection would absorb my whole life. Genius struggles with love, and its power is exalted by the ardor of the passion; I have the misfortune or the happiness, whichever you may like to term it, to be but a very ordinary

man; so my individuality would be annihilated in this feeling."

"Henriette thinks however that you are wrong in remaining unmarried."

"If I was M. d'Astouans I would say that Madam was right."

"So you won't make any decision?".

"On the contrary, uncle, I am making a book, said Lucien," laughing this time.

"Ah!"

"A book wherein I prove the inutility of labor."

"If you are as well qualified in theory as in practice, it will be a successful book."

"It will be finished the day after my death."

"You are a fool!"

"The world has ever slandered philosophers."

For four or five years, uncle and nephew frequently conversed on such themes, Madame d' Astouans sometimes taking part, and often she would close the discussion by laughing with her cousin, whom she carried away with her to the *Bois de Boulogne*, or to the *Theatre des Italiens*.

However, as there is no power that patience

may not control, no obstacle that it will not find an opportunity to overcome, it happened one day that M. de Villaines came near swooning for joy, on hearing Lucien de Varny say that he would accept an office proposed to him. The excellent peer of France could not believe it; he flung himself on his nephew's neck, nearly suffocating him with his embraces, and to prevent him reconsidering his decision, he obliged Lucien to give him his word, without troubling himself as to the motives which had induced him to say yes.

These motives were, nevertheless, curious enough to be given. Madam d'Astouans was less discreet or less prudent than her father, and she asked her cousin for his reasons, who told them to her ingeniously.

It was the time when the Parisian edileship, caught unawares by the craze for improvement which affects all municipal administrations, resolved to improve the *Boulevard Italien* by levelling and laying down a new system of pavement; this in the meantime blocked up the side-streets, opened some quagmires under the walkers' feet and raised barricades between their legs. To complete Lucien's misfortunes, the workmen had invaded the two acades for

the Opera's passages, in order to lay there certain gas and water pipes in which they were experimenting.

For a month, boulevard and passage were impracticable, and he could not endure it any longer. Interrupted in his custom walk, provoked in his affections, he had abruptly decided to quit the city, judging it would be alike indifferent to him whether he suffered in Paris or elsewhere.

The office proposed to him was the secretaryship to the embassy at Naples. M. de Villaines tore it from the minister, passing valiantly over the bodies of three deputies who were eager to get it for their sons, and of five diplomatists who were asking it for themselves.

There was great surprise and no little excitement amongst the Boheme of the *Boulevard Italien* when they learned that Lucien would go. Several of the members refused to believe it; the most sceptical betting five to one that the thing was utterly impossible; the others were content to laugh at it, and Lucien had some difficulty in convincing the most moderate of the truth of the intended journey.

The *Moniteur* in its official columns gave the last stroke to the unbelievers, but the day

when the young secretary went to take the oath at the Tuileries, he was probably more astonished than any one else.

"I dream!" said he, looking at his embroidered clothes.

"No, indeed not!" hastily answered M. de Villaines, who was overlooking him sharply, afraid that he might escape from him. "You understand at last the necessities of our social order; you have come to agree with my wise observations; you will conquer a place amongst your fellow-citizens; you will render yourself useful to the public; make your name illustrious by an honorable employment of your mental faculties, and take your part of labor in the social work."

Lucien remained stunned on hearing this speech: he could not believe that he could ever desire or accomplish so much. But during his uncle's remarks, a thought crossed his mind.

"It seems to me, uncle," said he, without employing any periphrasis,—which proved at once that he was taking his place in the category of diplomatists who believe that the right line is the shorter way from a negotiation to a treaty;—"it seems to me, that I won't be able to cut a very fine figure, in Naples, with my six

thousand francs income, even increasing it with my secretary's salary."

"What are you saying of six thousand francs!" exclaimed the peer of France with indignation; "you will have twelve! twenty! thirty! as much as you want; you can draw on me as on a target; my pocketbook is there to receive the blows. A secretary of embassy who is my nephew will never be short for anything!"

"However—"

"Silence! I know too well what I owe to the king's government and to our institutions."

Lucien had no right to oppose himself to the proofs of devotion that his uncle was willing to give to the king's government and institutions. He therefore resigned himself and left for Naples one beautiful morning.

The highway surveyors' agents of the Parisian edileship were going on to overthrow the boulevard.

On Lucien's arrival at Marseilles, he devoted two hours to visit the curiosities of a town which has none; and when the time expired, he learned that the steamer which was announced to make the trip to Italy and the Orient would

not sail till the following day; he instantly re-entered his carriage and decided to make the trip by land, perhaps because it was a longer and more expensive journey. Lucien abhorred cheap travel. Besides this, he did not like to run over the country, jumping from town to town, like stones that slide on the water, rebounding from wave to wave.

Lucien crossed Italy royally, like an Englishman, by traveling short days and sometimes, going out of the way, to give a glance at towns and cities which displayed their spires away off in the distance.

He was only a short journey from Naples, when one of those accidents which the opera *libretti* have so much abused, obliged him to stop in a small hamlet, the houses of which, wretched enough, were scattered on both sides of the highway. The carriage axle-tree was broken, and the blacksmith of the place wanted three or four hours to put it in good order again.

Lucien, who was in no hurry to reach Naples, stepped into an inn which was proudly exposing to the dust and the sun a sign that a Neapolitan Raphael had painted with ochre, on a blue background, a leopard endowed with dreadful claws and teeth, and beneath which was seen: "*Alle arme d' Inghiltera.*"

Chapter II.

At table, and what was said.—Relation of the strange adventure of Don Hermenegildo Saria.—The joyous guests.—The American Charles Sheldon.—"You are mistaken, gentlemen."—The presentation.—M. le marquis de Noirmoutiers.—The marquis relates the finale of the Don Hermenegildo story.—The feuilletonist against his will.—The marquis' farewell.—Lucien continues the interrupted trip.—The carriage accident.

Four or five young men of good appearance occupied the end of a table, around which sat a dusty and blustering company of waggoners, monks and strolling virtuosi, each of whom was eating out of a large earthen pan full of macaroni. Lucien looked for a chair and a table; but there was no other table, in the dining hall. The young men pushed their chairs closer together and beckoned to him to come and sit down by them.

"There was no other choice; besides the invitation was made with such delicacy and good nature, that Lucien accepted it without hesitation.

The discussion at the table was very animated, and, from it, Lucien soon ascertained that he was in the company of gentlemen. The topic was an adventure that for the past eight

days had caused much excitement in Naples, and was the subject of general conversation. Lucien, who knew nothing about this story, and who desired to have an idea of what was happening in the city where accident had conducted him, while he swallowed some roasted becaficos and ravioli, listened with all attention to the words, which were whirled out with Italian volubility.

"It is a strange adventure," said a young man, with a fine modeled head, and beautiful black hair; "it would remind one of romantic Spain!"

"We will have to make our wills before we leave for a *rendez-vous*," exclaimed the neighbor of the secretary; "my opinion is that it will be necessary to go to confession before we fall in love."

"But to begin with, did she love him?"

"A queer question! Would she have left her blind open if she had not waited for him, and would she have waited for him if she had not loved him?"

"That is no proof."

"It is a conclusive one for me. In matters of gallantry, the proverb that says we must never depend on appearances is wrong; here,

the form is everything, substance amounts to nothing."

"Pshaw! who can know when the love comedy began?"

"No matter! I will acknowledge that any woman does not love me, provided that all make me believe it."

"But, gentlemen, this is not the question, said a jolly fellow with a red face. "It is essential to know what became of the unhappy Don Hermenegildo Saria."

"He must be dead. It is not far from the signora Theresa's balcony to the sea," said another who had scant whiskers in the Spanish style."

"Or else, the marquis has killed him?"

"Stabbed him?"

"Assassinated him?"

"And why not? After all it should be but right."

"Right allows it perhaps, but politeness forbids it."

"It is certain if husbands begin to play with stilletos, we have nothing left us but to take the cowl."

"Let us not be too pretentious. How many amongst us are there who would enter a monastery?" exclaimed the young man with Greek features.

"Would it be in the Camaldules that Don Hermenegildo took refuge?"

"We would know it; and no one has seen him since the sixth of July."

"Has anyone seen the marchioness since?"

"I have! I have!" exclaimed four or five voices."

"Pale, undoubtedly, the eyes wearied, the looks sorrowful, the forehead bowed as Toresilla in *Norma?*"

"Not at all; but cheerful, lively, smiling and ever pretty as Stellita in *Il Barbiere.*"

"Oh! the women!" said a fair young man, casting a glance, gloomy as an elegy, towards the heavens.

"Has any one spoken to her of her victim?"

"I did," said a tall cavalier stroking a long whisker worn in the fashion of refined men at the time of the League. "She laughed at me."

"However, she loved him?"

"To tell you the truth, I don't believe it."

"He was followed her everywhere!"

"He was her shadow!"

"At the ball, in her *loge*, out walking, beneath her windows, whom would we see? Him, him, always him!"

"Then she did not love him. Happy men

are prudent," cried the young man with scant whiskers.

"When they are not reckless," replied the long-haired cavalier, with a smile.

"Does anybody know exactly how the thing happened? I come from Capua where the story has been related to us in different ways by the officers of the Princess's regiment," said the young man with a fair complexion.

"Here is the version which seems the most exact; I got it from a St. January bell-ringer who is the lover of one of the maids of Madame de Noirmoutiers. You all know that, for seven or eight months past Don Hermenegildo Saria was paying assiduous attentions to the marchioness," replied the one whose beautiful head Lucien was admiring.

"He was succeeding you," interrupted the big, stout young man.

"And he was like me. Bouquets, sweet billets, sighs, serenades, were passed without being remarked by the beautiful but unimpassionable marchioness. However, Don Hermenegildo was persevering."

"It is wonderful that she is not dead from it."

"Tediousness does not kill; at most it only

makes one sleepy. But who has ever sounded this abyss that we call a woman's heart! Suddenly, Madame de Noirmoutiers changed her attitude towards the Spaniard. Her brusqueness became benevolence, her coolness amiability, her irony compassion. She had entered in the phase of pity. Then, one night—it happened about midnight—a man wrapped in a cloak glided into the garden where Madame de Noirmoutiers used to walk while Naples was asleep. This man jumped over the wall, opened a door of which he had the key, and climbed up a stair that led to the private apartments of the marchioness. Suddenly a light shines through the half-open windows; a blind is hastily raised, and a man—it was Don Hermenegildo—springs upon the balcony now flooded with a strong light; a ladder falls; he is about to disappear; when he is seized by a hand and brought back into the room: the lamp extinguished, some suppressed murmurs pass between the lowered grooves of the blind!—Desdemona was perhaps weeping at Othello's feet."

"Was he, then, the husband?"

"Undoubtedly! the *Deus ex machina!*"

"Is this husband known?"

"Very little. I never saw him."

"Neither have I. He is eccentric; something like a diplomatist grafted upon an antiquary: he travels continually for the benefit of our gracious sovereign, and signs treaties while collecting *old sous*, which are called medals in archeological jargon."

"It appears that on that night, the devil who served him in the capacity of coachman, had maliciously brought him back to his home. In the morning, a patrol passing under his garden wall, perceived the ladder against the balcony. The *hotel* was silent; and since then, Don Hermenegildo has not been seen. His letters are waiting for him at a home where he has not re-appeared; nobody has met him, and all search made to find him has been in vain."

"The marquis must have buried him in his garden."

"Or in one of his cellars."

"Perhaps he has inclosed him alive in a cabinet of which he has walled the door! Antiquarians have ferocious instincts."

"May be he has poisoned him with hemlock found at Pompeii."

"And will apply himself to embalming him, to give him the scientific shape of a mummy."

"In brief, whether it be by the sword, by fire or by poison, Don Hermenegildo is dead."

"You are mistaken, gentlemen," said suddenly a big, good-natured looking man with a florid complexion who, for an hour past, had taken a seat at that part of the table left vacant by the Neapolitan wagoners.

All the young men turned their eyes towards the interlocutor. By the glances which they exchanged, Lucien concluded that none of them knew the man.

"You say, sir?" replied one of the gentlemen with a smile that clearly showed his anger!

"I said that you were all mistaken."

"Ah!" exclaimed the cavalier with the whiskers, "and you pretend, sir, to be better informed than us?"

"I have such pretention," replied the big man, as he carved a partridge that was just served to him.

"We are five gentlemen here who would be curious to acquire the proof of it," said the young man who had related the story so attentively heard by Lucien; "let me tell you our names," added he rising:

"Antoino de Ponte-Vecchio, captain of the

guards; Rafael Rasconti, lieutenant to the Syracuse dragoons; Orlando Zacari, huntsman; Max de Rheiss, officer of the huntsmen; monsieur?..."—directing towards Lucien an interrogative look.

"Lucien de Varny, secretary of the French embassy," said the other.

"And your servant, Charles Sheldon, tourist," continued the young man, "who would be delighted to hear the explanations that you have undoubtedly to give them: but before hearing you, we would all desire to know to whom we shall be indebted for the honor of learning the truth?"

"To the marquis James de Noirmoutiers," answered the big good-natured man, inclining himself towards his plate.

The six young men saluted him.

There was a moment's silence which was broken by the American tourist, who seemed the most resolute of the troop.

"We will confess, M. le marquis," said he, "that you better than anybody else are in a position to know how the affair happened at your home, for you were there when Don Hermenegildo arrived. Then you have not killed him?"

"I have neither stabbed, poisoned, nor buried him; and neither did I make a skeleton or a mummy of him."

"Then how did you act with him?"

"I invited him to supper."

The young men looked stupified at each other.

"You are astonished at that, gentlemen," continued the marquis, who however took care to attend to his meal, "he at first certainly made some objections, but he finished by accepting. And we sat at table together."

"And cheek by jowl?" added Lucien.

"Not at all; Madame de Noirmoutiers kept us company. In place of hemlock, I poured him out some Falernian wine found under the ruins of Herculaneum. He had the politeness to declare it excellent."

"It was the least he owed you."

"I admit that he uttered an exclamation when he saw me; it was because he had undoubtedly mistaken for a dagger the Etruscan flat candlestick that I was carrying."

"You stopped him, however?"

"Certainly. If he had been seen coming down from my balcony at one o'clock in the morning, it would have been believed that he

was in good luck, and I was willing to save his reputation from being belied."

"It is a noble revenge."

"The amours of our epoch are not worthy any other. Do you think I have the humor to make my wife play the role of Jane Shore? Because a Catalonian hidalgo casts his sweet eyes too closely on the marchioness, would you wish that I mete out to him the fate of Rizzio? This, gentlemen, is no longer the custom of the world, and antiquarian though I am, I understand modern ideas."

"I have no doubt of it, M. le marquis," answered Charles with an unaccountable smile, in which irony was mixed with politeness; "but you did not tell us how this marvelous supper terminated."

"Apparently as all repasts end. By an amicable intermixture of toasts. Madame de Noirmoutiers being in a charming and cheerful state of mind."

"She is a woman of so much wit!" said Antonio de Ponte-Vecchio.

"When there was no more wine in the decanters, the soft glimmer of aurora was playing through the blinds which cast on us a fresh and rosy light. Madame de Noirmoutiers then retired."

"It was the hour of vengeance!"

"It was the hour to sleep. Notwithstanding my wish to be agreeable to you, I cannot satisfy you on this point, for there is neither poisoned cup, nor Carthagenian sword in all this."

"Nevertheless, Don Hermenegildo Saria has disappeared," exclaimed Orlando the huntsman.

"You would say that he is gone," retorted the antiquary.

"Gone!" repeated the group of young men.

"Oh! indeed, yes! he has gone on board of a tartane which was sailing for Malta."

"I understand," said the lieutenant Rafael, you had him arrested by three or four sbirros and led bound on board the tartane."

"I would have you remember, sir," said the big diplomatist crossing his hands upon his round stomach, "that there are no more sbirros. Don Hermenegildo took on himself to execute this trip, which I had not at all begged him to accomplish. When my wife had saluted us, I arose, and, taking my companion by the arm, I amused myself by showing him my galleries, which he had the extreme politeness to admire. While speaking of Greek art, we arrived at my door; it was daylight, and with the exception

of two or three fried-fish peddlars the street was asleep. I pointed out the deserted causeway to my guest, and we separated."

"And he did not say anything to you? did nothing?" exclaimed Charles.

"What do you think he could do against a husband!"

"Oh, indeed! If I had been in his place, the thing would never have gone off in that passive style," said captain Antonio.

"You speak very easily, sir, but it is evident you are ignorant of what it is to have a midnight interview with a husband. If you knew what terrible power we possess, when we appear dressed just in our night-gown and slippers! The most formidable Don Juan would tremble and shiver under such circumstances.

"Vilified, scoffed at and dismissed! it is too much," said Max.

"You would have been better pleased had I killed him, I suppose. Well everyone gets his revenge in his own way. I shall never kill anybody. While we were in Rome, last year, Madame de Noirmoutiers had an amour."

"Ha! Ha! a new one!" exclaimed Rafael.

"No, an old one in the order of dates; but he came after *you*."

"It is thus we lose ourselves with the marchioness," added Charles; "no one but yourself, sir, would commit an error in this way."

"You know," answered the antiquarian with splendid command of temper, and fixing his looks on Mr. Sheldon," that my wife is too pretty to ever be short of lovers. I have here in my pocket, *a la Petrarch*, our friend's last sonnet but one. Are you curious to hear it?"

"Yes, indeed!" eagerly cried the Bavarian noble.

"It is useless," brusquely replied Charles, his cheeks slightly coloring.

"As Mr. Sheldon judges that it would be wasting time," continued the impassable marquis, "we shall come back to the amours of Rome.—It was a gentleman of Verona, a very fine man indeed, and proportionately rich. He got up endless *fetes* to please Madame de Noirmoutiers. Our nights were a long concert. How many times have I not fallen asleep on the *andante* of *Bell lma innamorata!* But the music, however fine became monotonous, as it always does when there is too much of it; while the company where engaged, I put my hand upon a dozen gallant epistles of the Veronese: my wife marvelously helped me by

feigning to have lost them near her room, and two days after they were printed in a feuilleton of the *Diario di Roma.*"

"Printed!"

"All entire," said the antiquary. "They obtained an immense success. They were written in the most elegant Italian romantic style, and two transparent initials were left to each letter to quietly allow the name of the author be known to everybody."

"And what did the Veronese do about it?" asked captain Antonio.

"He went to Syria, and I believed he was killed at Beyrout."

"What a born devil!" muttered Charles, contemplating the diplomatist with admiration.

"You have some marvelous means of ridding yourself of the lovers of the marchioness," said Rafael; "the one gets out of the depths of despair to drink some Falernian wine of the period of Pontius Pilate in your company; the other goes and gets killed because you undertook to make him a feuilletonist against his will. You are doubtless philosopher enough to permit me to make this observation:—Do you believe that this will be sufficient, to preserve you from all accident in the future?"

"I have an armor which renders me as invulnerable as a husband can be on this sublunary sphere."

"What do you call this armor?"

"You know it! It is Madame de Noirmoutiers herself."

"How do you mean?" exclaimed Lucien who was perplexed by the phlegmatic temper of the good-natured old man.

"If her grace is a loadstone that attracts, her coquetry is a shield which guards."

"God give me life," said Charles in an undertone, "and I shall test the defects of the armor."

Just then, a postilion announced to the marquis that the carriage was ready.

"Good-bye, gentlemen," said the diplomatist, rising; "I start for Vienna where his majesty the king of the Two-Sicilies sends me, and I leave my wife under your protection."

"Who could be more impertinent than this old antiquary!" exclaimed Rafael petulantly. He makes me feel anxious to fall in love with his wife."

"Don't burn yourself there," said Charles to him, quietly.

"But, yourself?"

"Oh! as for me, it is already done."

Ten minutes later, the company separated and Lucien resumed the road to Naples.

When two or three leagues from the city gate, a blockade of carts and carrioles stopped his post-chaise. Upon the highway stood a carriage whose horses were pawing the ground and impatiently champing their bits. A young lady, leaning out of the coach door, was lecturing the groom.

"Will you go on there!" said she; "I shall never have time to dress."

"I cannot, madam," answered the unhappy coachman.

Suddenly the horses, scared by the noise, dashed down the lower side of the road at a brisk gallop. The carriage, carried away, pitched over the small ditch alongside the bank, ran through the field, struck a stump, and was turned upside down on the grass in less time than it takes to describe it.

Lucien springing over the half-door of his chaise; full of anxiety, ran and found, standing close by the overturned carriage, a lady laughing loudly over her mishap.

Chapter III.

Lucien makes Madame de Noirmoutiers' acquaintance.—The invitation.—A few words on M. and Madame de Noirmoutiers.—The marchioness' character.—Lucien's first visit to the marchioness.—The impromptu ball.—A game of cards by two officers.—The stakes.—Madame de Noirmoutiers leaves Naples for the villa Orso.—Lucien and the two Neapolitans.

At first Lucien, surprised, stopped; but seeing the turn the accident had taken, approached the laughing lady whom he saluted:

"I do not believe, madam," said he, "that it is necessary to ask if you are injured?"

"Oh! not in the least," answered the lady shaking her head with a movement full of gaiety; "it is but a trifling affair, and I was stretched on the turf which is as soft as down; but upon getting up, I could not help laughing at seeing the singular figure poor Peter cut."

Poor Peter, who was the coachman, and had been thrown heavily down enough from his seat, looked at the caleche with such a pitiful expression of sorrow and humiliation, that the lady had much difficulty in restraining herself from a fresh outburst of laughter.

"Well, my friend," said she at last, "there is nobody either killed or wounded. You will meditate to-morrow on this adventure; but at

present, it is advisable to raise the carriage and start at once. They are waiting for me at the ball, and if I do not return immediately to Naples, I will not have time to prepare my toilet."

"Certainly, my lady," said the groom, at the same time scratching his ear, "we should raise the carriage; but there is something else the matter."

"And what is that?"

"The shaft is broken, my lady."

A glance assured madame that this was true. The shaft was broken in the middle. She stamped her little foot on the ground with impatience.

"What shall we do now?" said she petulantly.

"Confound it! I do not know," replied Peter.

Lucien understood that the moment to offer his services had come.

"The unlucky accident which has thrown you into this meadow, madam," said he to her, "must serve as an excuse for the boldness of my proposition, and I dare to hope that you will not be offended if I beg you to accept a seat in my carriage."

The lady bowed slightly, glanced at her interlocutor, then at the post-chaise proudly waiting on the causeway, and lastly at the caleche lying forlornly on the grass. She had a great inclination to answer yes, but she hesitated however.

Lucien, who noticed her perplexity, repeated:

"Pardon me if I insist, madam; but it seems I heard you speak about a toilet which you would not have time to make if you could not soon arrive in Naples; for goodness sake, do not deprive those who are waiting for you of the pleasure they will have in seeing you."

"As you conclude they would be so unhappy," said she, "I will be compassionate."

The lady gave some orders to Peter, took the proffered arm of Lucien, and stepped lightly into the post-chaise, which started off at a gallop.

"This is to what one exposes oneself when one is an affectionate wife," said she, nonchalantly establishing herself in a corner of the carriage; "if I have not taken a heroic sort of fancy to accompany my dear husband, this accident would not have happened me."

"I thank your heroism," answered Lucien, simply.

The conversation thus began, instantly took a lively and pleasant turn, which put both speakers in excellent humor. The lady showed that she had some wit and originality of imagination, and the cavalier supported with his best efforts the good reputation of his countrymen.

So when the carriage entered Naples, it seemed to them that the journey had occupied but a few moments ; it had however taken full a long hour.

"Here we are in town," said Lucien to the lady, "but I do not know where should drive you."

"Ah! that is true," said she. Please instruct your coachman to drive to Toledo street, to the *hotel* of the marchioness de Noirmoutiers."

At the mention of this name, Lucien started and looked more attentively at his fair neighbor than even he had been doing. She appeared to him what she was, wonderfully beautiful. A divinely shaped head poised over a most graceful body by a delightfully slender neck.

Lucien, whose imagination was active, had ceased to speak when the post-chaise stopped

in front of a mansion whose double doors were instantly flung open.

As the marchioness put her pretty foot on the steps, she quickly turned.

"But now I think of it," said she, I ought at least, sir, to know to whom I am indebted for this really imported service."

"M. de Varny," answered Lucien.

"M. de Varny," repeated the marchioness, "stop a moment; it seems to me that this name is not unknown to me... M. de Varny; yes, it is really that."

And Madame de Noirmoutiers toyed with the tresses of her abundant hair in consulting her memory.

"Ah! I recollect," she exclaimed whilst Lucien was contemplating her, impatiently but silently; "are you not, sir, connected with the diplomatic body?"

"I am secretary to the French embassy in Naples, madam."

"Yes, yes! and your name is Lucien?"

"Lucien, at your service, madam."

"Madame d'Astouans, your cousin and my friend, has written me very much about you in her last letters, and has informed me of your recent arrival in Naples. If you look attentively

among your papers you will find somewhere a letter of introduction to me."

"I hope so, madam," said Lucien pulling out his pocket-book which he commenced searching eagerly, when he was stopped by Madame de Noirmoutiers.

"It is unnecessary," said she, "an acquaintance has been formed between us, and I would have you burn the letter, were I not afraid that it might contain, in a post-script, a want of some of those coral trinkets to which Parisian ladies attach so much value, since the Neapolitans do not wear them any longer. Hereafter please consider this house as yours, and come to see me as often as you can."

Madame de Noirmoutiers presented her hand to Lucien which he kissed, and she vanished into the mansion.

One word now regarding M. and Madame de Noirmoutiers, whose names were introduced ever and anon into the conversations which charm the leisure hours of the Neapolitans, who are one of the most chattering and curious people on the face of the earth.

The marquis de Noirmoutiers was the eldest son of an *emigre'* who, driven from France by

the Reign of Terror, had sought an ayslum at Naples, where he married a wealthy heiress of Capitanate passionately fond of titles and heraldy. On the death of his parents, he became possessed of both nobility and fortune, so that gratitude as well as habit attached him to the soil where he was born, he had made Naples his home and solicited from the government an office, which was at once tendered him. His taste for antiquities was acquired by traveling, and his best friends did not know which he liked more, to sign a protocol or to classify a medal. It was in Paris that he met and married Mlle. de Miriolles, for notwithstanding he was over forty years, he entered into matrimony courageously, and with the philosophy of a man who had a passion in which he could take refuge in case of a misadventure, arising out of the doubtful eventualities of a disproportionate marriage. As outside of the numismatic art, he was a diplomatist of wit and fine manners, he was not displeasing to the lady, who herself, captivated him by those sensible traits of character which are not ordinarily courted by aspirants :—a great vivacity, a moving humor, much ardor in the pursuit of pleasure, an inalterable gaiety which

would cause her audience to pass from a laugh to tears in an instant, and so capricious and fantastic an imagination, that she managed to see things the reverse of what they appeared to others.

When she arrived in Naples, she allowed herself to gaily float with the tide, though to tell the truth she helped a little, until she reached the highest step on the unsteady ladder which Fashion holds with uncertain hand. Yet she had the supreme art to maintain it there herself. If the epithet of *lionne* had passed the Alps, Madame de Noirmoutiers would have been the first *lionne* of Naples; she satisfied herself to be the most welcome, carressed and sought for woman in the city. She was born without fortune and had been simply educated in an austere house, where ease was parsimoniously distributed. She had in herself an innate love of luxury and a taste for splendor.

From the very first visits the marquis paid to Mlle. de Miriolles, her parents used all the arts and influence in their power to make her appear agreeable to him; telling her that a pretty woman is happy only so far as fortune allows her to satisfy her least whim and fancy, and that a rich husband should be sought, be-

cause his wealth would permit her to set out in more relief, and make more attractive, her own natural gifts.

Thus it is that so many sacrilegious *couplings*, so many *immoral marriages* are planned and consummated in our day ; forty-nine out of fifty of which, as in the present case,—as will be seen further on,—lead to consequences so terrible and heart-rending.

The antiquary placed his income at her disposal, and the young wife used it with a charming prodigality which immediately gave to her mansion a great renown in Naples. It became, in a very short time, the animated and noisy centre of all that the city of Parthenope had of wealthy idlers, of fashionable ladies, of foreigners of distinction, of eminent artists. It was precisely what the marquis most desired; being himself of a taciturn character, he used the unalterable cheerfulness of his wife as an antidote. Never did he show himself more pleased, than when he saw her surrounded by people eager to please her.

We will be told, perhaps, that the marquis was a singular husband who took such pains to approach the flame which so many others avoid ; but there are husbands of all kinds,

and the marquis was one who believed that a multiplicity of acquaintances in the excitement of life were conjugal conductors.

Here we are obliged to avow that Madame de Noirmoutiers was coquettish; this adjective poorly expresses our meaning:—she was possessed of the most ardent desire to please everybody, at any price. This desire was a requirement of her nature, which she instinctively obeyed without calculating what she was doing. "Please at first, ever pleased," was her law, and she never was so happy, as when she felt the seductions of her charms and wit exercised their empire upon those who approached her. Carried away by a belief in her superiority in everything, by the conviction of her beauty, Madame de Noirmoutiers could not understand why everyone did not submit instantly to her influence. Greedy of homage and adulation, although she was a woman of rare wit and of real intelligence, she accepted them as flowers do the dew. It was in some respects a tribute owed to her by everyone.

It was thought that with this character, Madame de Noirmoutiers exposed herself to be entrapped in her turn by the first attractive dandy who threw himself in her way, and that

the assumed indifference of an aspirant cunning enough to play the part of a cold Lovelace or of an impenetrable Byronian hero, would be able to secure an easy triumph. Such was not the fact, however. This rakish trick, which never fails to succeed with vulgar flirting women, failed with her, and whoever resolved to practice it only brought himself into ridicule and gained in her mind, the reputation of a simpleton. It appeared to her pride that to protest against her superiority, was like denying the light which was so much the worse for those who could not see it. She would say of them that they were devoid of intelligence and sentiment, and she shrugged her shoulders. But she took great care to have a grudge against them, she simply forgot to notice them.

With all this, Madame de Noirmoutiers was good-natured, frank and loyal, and devoted to her friends who could ask anything of her, except the sacrifice of a ribbon.

Such was the woman that Lucien went to see the day after his arrival in Naples. He was ushered into a splendid apartment where marvels of art were distributed with charming taste. Vases, tablets, statues, mosaics and glittering arms were arranged along the galleries to the

boudoirs, with a profusion which in no way conflicted with elegance. One would guess at the first glance, that the hand of a woman endowed with the highest degree of artistic sentiment had presided in arranging the rich treasures collected by the marquis.

Lucien had found the letter of which Madame de Noirmoutiers' had spoken to him:—she read it rapidly whilst they were alone.

"Well, well," said she, passing from paragraph to paragraph, "Madame d'Astouans forgets that she has already written me on this subject, but on account of your relationship, such things must be overlooked. Let us see," and she crumpled the paper between her pretty fingers, "do me quickly some news of that dear Paris which I love so much!"

Lucien answered, and the conversation was prolonged, Madame de Noirmoutiers soon began to use the first resource of her coquetry, when several persons entering; the conversation took a general turn, and the marchioness ceased to skirmish with Lucien, to give battle to some hairbrained fop who engaged her attention.

It happened that this very evening a large company met at Madame de Noirmoutiers' house; the most fashionable ladies, coming in

immediately after leaving the theatre of San Carlo, and bringing their husbands in their train. Visitors succeeded each other with marvelous rapidity, the marchioness, who was a woman of the world, and who well understood how to best entertain company, improvised a ball which soon produced a sympathic feeling of happiness. As there are none in Italy who are not more or less musicians, an orchestra was immediately organized, and with half a dozen basses, violins and flutes, produced from a cabinet, under the lead of a piano, the whole company gaily began to dance.

In the midst of the throng, Lucien observed Mr. Sheldon, and the two young men instantly approached each other.

"Nothing is talked of but of your exploits," said Charles after the usual salutations.

"Of my exploits! of me?" asked Lucien quite astonished.

"Who else then, if you please, yesterday, saved Madame de Noirmoutiers and brought her back triumphantly into Naples? Who was it kissed her hand on the steps of her mansion and is found the first in her drawing-room today?"

"There were some incidents for which I

have good reason to rejoice, but, for heavens sake! do not raise to the dignity of an exploit an adventure which concludes with a promenade. As to my triumph, I am inclined to believe that it will be like Don Hermenegildo's victory.

"It has, nevertheless, furnished the conversation of half the town."

"That part of it which has little else to do."

"I beg your pardon,—it employs itself in speaking ill of the other."

"I regret then that it cannot injure me; it would be a proof that I have something to lose."

"Is it, indeed the fact, that you did not know Madame de Noirmoutiers before your arrival in Naples?" said Mr. Sheldon, trying to disguise his jealous anxiety beneath an air of indifference.

"I did not know her, but I was recommended to her without my knowledge."

"Then, bless the fortune which has brought you further into her good graces than one year of assidious attention could have done."

Compelled to speak of the marchioness, Charles dwelt complaisantly on his theme, and passing, from one subject to another, he sketched a portrait of her character similar to that we have already given." Perhaps, inspired by a

secret spite, he overdrew the picture. Lucien listened to him, with his head sometimes bowed, and sometimes looking at the marchioness who smiled to him. He had but a brief acquaintance with her, yet he already took a singular interest in everything which concerned her. The words of Mr. Sheldon troubled him however.

Charles perceiving this, continued:

"You see that, it is but two days since you first met her, and she has already gained the power over you that she exerts upon all who approach her."

"That is then to say that you feel it yourself, and perhaps more deeply than others;" replied Lucien, fixing a curious look upon his interlocutor.

"Perhaps," said Charles.

"Then you love her?"

Mr. Sheldon paused for a moment, during which he appeared to reflect more seriously than was usual with him, then raising his head and looking at Lucien with an intelligent smile, he replied:

"I can truly answer you, you seem to have French wit enough to understand this sort of thing. No, I do not love her, but I am smitten with her."

"Then, you are in the best condition to succeed," said Lucien with a throbbing heart.

"Not exactly; not with her, at least, because it is one of the strangest mysteries of her inexplicable nature that to aspire to her heart we must love her."

A blush here passed over the face of Lucien, and he threw a glance tender and deep towards the white queen of the ball.

"But it seems to me," said he, "that many people must love her; she is a woman to inspire love in everybody."

"Ah! you had better believe it," replied Charles; "it is not such an easy thing to love whom you will."

Max de Rheiss, who had lost one hundred ducats by play, came to borrow Charles' purse, and walked off with him.

Lucien, being left alone, allowed his thoughts to float around Madame de Noirmoutiers, like those giddy moths which hover about a flame; the marchioness occasionally encountered his looks, as she passed from group to group, and his serious and preoccupied expression delighted her.

He was just entering the gallery where the card tables were arranged, when Antonio and Rafael passing by, saluted him.

The first time Lucien had seen them they appeared unfriendly toward him, for what cause, however, he could not understand. On the present occasion they seemed preoccupied with some bitter thoughts, and both of them quickly passed on, conversing in a low tone.

Lucien stopped Charles, who was returning from the gaming-room with lightened purse.

"Look what gloomy figures," he said, indicating Antonio and Rafael to his friend.

"They are plotting some nefarious scheme," answered Charles.

Lucien interrogated him with his eyes.

"Oh!" continued Charles, accompanying his word with a scornful gesture, "they wear the hearts of villains under the uniform of soldiers."

"You judge them severely."

"I judge them as they esteem themselves. It is not that they are not brave, and I believe that, when the opportunity occurs, they will act boldly; who will not fight now a days? But at the bottom, their hearts are cowardly. Do you see, my dear M. de Varny, there is not a single drop of Italian blood in those veins. It is a bastard mixture of English and Austrian, which ferments under the Neapolitan sun. Do

not depend upon such natures; they are soft and supple as velvet, and, to make use of an expression of the poets, as treacherous as the waves."

"But, my dear Sheldon, by your manner with them yesterday I thought that you were their friend?"

"Pshaw!" returned the American, shrugging his shoulders in a philosophic way, "those people amuse me, that is all I care for. Besides, honest people are little accustomed to be morose."

The words of Charles Sheldon had, however, struck M. de Varny. Obedient to an impulse which came from the heart and not from the will, he went towards the Italians. Both were resting their hands on the back of two chairs placed at the end of a table. They were looking motionless and mutely at each other, the white gleams of an alabaster lustre rendering still more pale the tinge of their foreheads, where the shadow of a fatal thought seemed to reflect upon them.

"Well then! let us play for her?"

"So be it," answered Rafael, and he tore the envelope from a pack of cards. Lucien started up, his heart telling him that some in-

visible danger was hanging over Madame de Noirmoutiers.

He approached the two players. Antonio lifted his head, a cold smile playing about his lips, as he set himself to shuffle the cards.

Lucien threw some pieces of gold on the table.

"Which of you, gentlemen, will agree to cover this stake?" said he carelessly.

Rafael picked up the pieces of gold scattered on the green cloth of the table, and politely handed them back to him.

"I beg your pardon," said he to Lucien, "but neither of us can do that. What we play for cannot be paid."

The game began. The chances were sudden. In two games Antonio acknowledged defeat.

"I have lost," said he in brushing up the cards, whilst a feeling of triumph swelled the breast of his vanquisher. "But my word is given," continued Antonio; "I am yours when you are willing, Rafael."

"I count on it," replied the lieutenant, and both shook hands.

When they re-appeared at the ball, there was but a small group of talkers on a balcony, along which were a number of boxes of blooming orange-trees.

"What! you leave us, Madam," said a little *Abbe.*

"For a few days only," answered Madame de Noirmoutiers, "but do not despair, I am going to the villa Orso, and you know that is only ten or twelve miles from Naples."

"But it is a desert!" replied the Abbe.

"The retreat is planted with laurel-roses, lemon trees and jasmines," said she, "where we sometimes invite poor anchorites like yourself to come and do penance."

"Then they surely find a paradise there," returned the Abbe.

"Do you start this morning, Madam?" asked a French painter.

"I believe not," replied the marchioness; "I will sleep too late. It would be necessary for me to dare the caresses of the sun, and I confess that they seem to me too ardent at noon; I shall start undoubtedly towards evening."

The two players exchanged a glance which Lucien was quick in detecting.

"Let us form a guard of honor for you," said the painter, with a laughing bow.

"Willingly," said the marchioness; "it is a ride that will afford you an opportunity of

admiring Phœbus set in the gulf of Parthenope, which continues to inflame as in the mythological times, and I will take the painting which, I am sure, the scene will inspire you to sketch."

On the following day, two hours before sunset, a caleche, flanked by five or six cavaliers, traveled on the road to Sorrento. Madame de Noirmoutiers sat with coquettish grace in the carriage; the cavaliers were Antonio and Rafael, Lucien and Charles, the French painter, whom they called Horace Didier, and Max de Rheiss. A luncheon detained them for a few moments at the villa Orso, thence all took the road to Naples; but as they were going along a small clump of pines, Lucien observed a man emerge from among the trees and, in passing away, rapidly exchange a look and a few words with Rafael, who kept a short distance behind the party. The suspicions which Lucien had conceived the night before, were roused anew with redoubled strength.

As they were about to separate on entering the town, Charles asked the cavaliers if they would not like to pass the rest of the night at his residence.

"We sincerely regret not being able to ac-

cept," said Rafael, "for the captain and I are on duty to-night, and we must immediately push on towards the barracks. Good-bye, gentlemen!" And turning their horses' heads the two Neapolitans disappeared down a lane.

Chapter IV.

Lucien's anxieties.—A night expedition on the Bay of Naples.—The plot.—The two cavaliers.—Peppe the goatherd.—The encounter and the colloquy which followed.—Lead against Steel.—The provocation.—The two cavaliers' arrival.—The pretext and cause.—The duel.

A dread sense of impending danger took possession of Lucien. He abruptly left Charles and his friends and dashed in pursuit of the Italian officers; but in the labyrinth of streets in which they had disappeared, he lost track of them. For an instant he had an idea of taking to the plain and galloping to Orso Castle, but his horse was not strong, and the long journey it had already covered had almost completely exhausted it. As he slowly walked his horse, a thought struck him; he went straight to his residence, and there changing his clothes, he put a large hat on his head, a rude cloak over his

body, filled his purse with gold and ran in haste to the Chiaja. He jumped into a boat, stirred up the fisherman and hurried him to setting full sail by slipping a few ducats into his hand.

Lucien had remarked that the road which leads from Naples to the villa Orso described a large curve in following the sinuosities of the shore ; he thus hoped, by taking the line of the arc, to arrive at the villa Orso before Antonio and Rafael, that was supposing they intended going there, as his presentiments lead him to believe they did.

A fresh breeze ruffled the surface of the phosphorescent waters ; the waves running from the horizon to spread their luminous ridges on the silver sands ; the sea seemed to palpitate ; one might easily imagine that an harmonious respiration was rising upon the breast of the gulf that the nymph Parthenope has baptized with her sweet name. The stars, lost like golden nail heads in a deep sky, were reflected in the depths where upon Phœbus threw her radiant mantle. The bark flew under the sail light as a halcyon, gliding upon the water that it clave ; leaving behind its fleeting keel a long glistering wake, and whilst it was flying along, the fisherman sat at the stern singing *sotto voce* stray verses of Tasso.

Lucien cast a gloomy glance round the gulf, and, lost in his reveries, asked himself where he was going and what he purposed to do, and if he was not the plaything of a dream. He remembered the *Boulevard des Italiens* and was ordering the fisherman to put about, when he heard up above the open space the clattering sound of a furious gallop, and instantly lifting up his eyes, he saw pushing across a promontory two figures on horseback, flying at full speed, casting their shadows towards the transparent depths of the blue sky. It was like a doleful apparition, and the two cavaliers were already enveloped in darkness ere the resounding gallop of their steeds upon the flinty stones of the road had died away.

An instant later the keel of the bark grated upon the shingle, and Lucien leaped upon the strand. With a few bounds he had reached the limits of a garden, which declined from the villa Orso to the beach. In front of a group of tamarinds, a man was standing at the angle of a small pathway which led to the upper terrace, where the villa lifted up its white walls. At the first glance, Lucien knew that the man in his path was the same person who, a few hours before, had signaled and spoken to Rafael.

Lucien crept along in Indian fashion, keeping his body closely in the shadow of the shrubbery, until he came to a woody clump between the man and the villa, when he concealed himself in its recesses. The thought that a mysterious danger threatened the head of her whom he passionately adored, had suddenly developed in him the powerful faculties of the red men celebrated by COOPER: craft, patience and cool resolution. With eyes ardently fixed upon the dumb sentry who kept awake during the night, he waited.

The man, clothed in skins like a goatherd, stood steadfast and motionless with his head turned towards that part of the pathway running towards the highway. Before long, a light sound of steps on the gravel broke the silence, interrupted only by the moaning of the sea. Two men, wrapped in cloaks, appeared on the pathway. Lucien instantly recognized them as Antoino and Rafael.

In a few moments they reached the goatherd.

"It is thou, Peppe?" asked Rafael.

"It is me, my masters," answered the man, removing from his forehead a tattered hat, from which was picturesquely suspended a piece of red ribbon.

"Well, then?" queried the other.

"I have played *a la mora* with Giacomo the gardener; he lost and drank so much of the wine of Sicily, to comfort himself, that he now sleeps on the straw as quietly as a saint in its shrine. This explains how I have the key."

"Well! and Pablo the guard?"

"I made up so fine a story for him about a gang of marauders, who plunder the enclosures, that he is gone with his gun and dog, to watch figs which nobody cares about."

"Thou art, by Saint January! a queer and very smart fellow," said Rafael. "Give me the key, quick!"

"Who gives receives," replied the goatherd grimly, without moving.

"Here is my purse."

The goatherd took it and, balancing it in his hand, appeared to judge it sufficiently heavy, for he put it in the breast of his goatskin coat.

"Here is the key," said he.

"Art thou quite sure that it is the key of the green door?" asked Rafael on examining it.

"Try it," said Peppe, "and you will see it plays in the lock as a child in the arms of its mother."

"Follow us, then."

And all three directed their steps towards the terrace.

Lucien, motionless and scarcely breathing, had lost not a word of the conversation. When the three marched off, he ran towards the villa in a straight line, jumping over hedges, crossing walls built to exclude trespassers and climbing over espaliers. A few of the flint stones dislodged by his feet rolled down the road.

"Somebody is there," said Antonio stopping.

"It is only a goat browsing," replied Rafael.

"No," said Peppe, "it is a man; a smuggler undoubtedly."

"Go forward then!"

Lucien, panting, arrived first at the green door which opened into a garden forming a terrace all around the villa. It was a door used by the servants of the house; some large grating, high and cemented up into the wall, was closed at night. On the tops of the walls were pieces of broken glass, with their sharp points projecting outwards from the mortar, to defend the place against all attempts at escalade. When the grating was closed, and the doors padlocked, the villa Orso was like a fortress.

Lucien hid himself in an angle where a projecting part of the wall concealed him. The two

Neapolitans and the goatherd arrived shortly afterwards.

"Here is the door," said Rafael; "when I get into the garden, I will only have to climb to the gallery which turns upon the porticos, to throw up a thin blind, and between the alcove of the signora and I there will only remain a silk curtain."

Lucien heart throbbed wildly in his breast.

"We will see," added Rafael, if the coquetry of the lady will enable her to find some resource against this visit. But above all, we must understand each other well. Peppe must go and watch in front of that door; one whistle will let us know if the guard re-appears. As for you, captain, follow me. You remember our compact, don't you?"

"I remember it well," replied Antonio.

"You will stay under the porticos; a servant may take a fancy to enjoy the fresh air, and we must prevent him hearing and seeing. If it should happen that the lady should resolve to raise an alarm, at my call you must run, and instantly seize, gag and bear her off on the croup of my horse, and gallop towards your villa.

"And to-morrow?"

"To-morrow? It will be then by the grace of God! But I suppose her to have too much sense to wish to make a drama of this comedy."

"Perhaps."

"Pshaw! she will cry, will pray, and will faint."

Antonio, Rafael and Peppe having resolved upon their plan on the pathway, were turning to approach the green door, when they perceived a man walking under the terrace.

"Somebody!" said Rafael.

"It is only a clown," said Antonio, deceived by the costume of Lucien.

"Get out of this!" Rafael then said gruffly, moving towards him.

Lucien turned slowly, and stared at him.

"There is room here for everybody!" said he, in a disguised voice. "It pleases me to remain here, and here I shall stay."

"It is a smuggler," remarked Peppe. "He is looking out to gain a few ducats; give him half-a-dozen, and he will go."

"Let us finish," said Rafael, drawing some gold pieces out of his pocket; "take this and clear out!"

Lucien took the money and scattered it disdainfully in the dust, without making any reply.

At this unexpected action Rafael started back. Peppe shook his head at an exhibition of boundless folly—to him.

"This is not what we looked for," whispered the latter.

"Antonio and Rafael looked at each other, and then consulted together for a moment in a low voice. At last Rafael, taking an extreme decision, turned towards the unknown man, and, saluting him, said :

"If we have made a mistake, please excuse us, sir; but an affair of gallantry has brought us here; and if nothing of importance keeps you here, we will be obliged to you to leave us at our liberty."

"It is *because* you are here, M. Rafael Rasconti, that I am here also," answered Lucien loud voice.

Hearing himself called by name, the lieutenant of the Queen's Dragoons started as if he had been shot.

He covered himself, and, gliding his hand towards his cloak, replied, looking at the unknown man :

"If you know my name so well, we should at least be on an equal footing; will you inform me of yours, sir?"

"Lucien de Varny," replied the Frenchman, man, throwing back his large slouched hat.

"Ah! the secretary of the French embassy!" remarked Antonio.

"Yes," said Rafael with a bitter smile; "the man of the post-chaise."

Lucien remembered the words of Charles.

"As it may please you, gentlemen; but such I am, I have told you: I have come and I shall stay."

Rafael briskly half-opened his cloak; a dagger sparkled in his hand.

"I have anticipated this," said Lucien, and, springing back, he cocked two pistols and pointed them at the heads of the Neapolitans.

Antonio had imitated Rafael's action, but, at the sight of the pistols whose gaping muzzles viciously menaced them, their arms dropped.

"Throw down the weapons, gentlemen!" said Lucien; "you see that the game is at least even: lead against steel, and I strike from a longer distance."

The two Neapolitans slowly dropped their stilettos.

"Now, my friend Peppe will do me the favor to throw away his stick," added Lucien.

Peppe, who was not of a very bellicose na-

ture, hastened to obey the Frenchman's injunction.

"At present, let us talk, gentlemen," remarked M. de Varny with a firm voice, but as calmly as if he was discussing the latest fashions in a pretty woman's boudoir.

"Be it so!" said Rafael, who bit his nails with rage; "let us talk first, we will meet again later."

"I willingly agree to it," replied Lucien. "I heard you both, gentlemen, while you were concerting your nefarious plan."

"Ah!" said Rafael turning pale, "you follow the trade of spy, then!"

Lucien smiled disdainfully.

"You were plotting a villainous enterprise, gentlemen," said he, "two King's officers against one woman!"

Rafael made a step forward; the muzzle of a pistol advised him not to take another.

"We said that we would talk, gentlemen," added Lucien; "if I fire, I can kill you, and if I wound you only, you will assume on yourselves a wicked affair. Do not move any more, but do what I tell you."

Antonio and Rafael bowed their heads; their eyes flashed bitter, helpless hatred, and their lips were white with rage.

"You will return to Naples instantly," continued Lucien; "your horses are not far off, I believe; when I have seen you back, I will return to the door."

"Or go further, and higher, perhaps," insinuated Rafael under his breath.

Lucien glanced at him from head to foot with an expression of supreme contempt.

"I shall come again to that door, and woe betide you if you try to come back again, because then, by the Lord! I will not spare you. You have heard me, gentlemen?"

"Will you leave that door to-morrow, M. de Varny?" asked Rafael sneeringly.

"To-morrow if you dare, gentlemen, we shall finish as men of courage an encounter that you have commenced as bravoes."

Ten minutes after, Antonio and Rafael were galloping on the road to Naples.

As he had expected, Lucien received the next day a visit from the two Neapolitans, both of whom, as he was informed by Charles Sheldon, showed a disposition to act as gentlemen after they had conducted themselves as villains.

"This is a serious affair, gentlemen," said the secretary to them; "I imagine that you

understand all the discretion we should use. Nobody must in the least suspect the motive of our encounter, if by any accident the rumor of the duel gets abroad. And you are aware that outside of this, we will have a short distance to travel to meet face to face, without having to incur the little annoyance of a criminal trial."

"There are many precautions, it seems to me," said Rafael, "you should have thought of the other night."

"It is just because, the other night, I did not believe that I would have to fight two officers," coldly answered Lucien; "but, seeing your uniform, to-day, I remember what you are."

At this cool insult the two Italians turned pale.

"Let us have done with this," said Rafael, "and do as you please."

"If you think it proper, we will visit the Secret Museum; we will pick up during our walk M. Charles Sheldon and M. de Rheiss. You can join us, if you like, with some one of your friends,—signor Orlando Zacari, for example; we can meet in the hall, begin a discussion about some lively scandal in which I may interfere; you will be careful to answer me curtly enough; I will find in it a pretext to quarrel, and we will

provoke each other boldly. Then a fisherman's skiff will convey us by night on to Papal Territory, and our swords shall do the rest."

Everything occurred precisely as Lucien would have had it; but there was in the words of Antonio de Ponte-Vecchio and Rafael Rasconti, a bitterness so haughtily expressed and so much abhorrence vainly dissimulated, that Charles was not befooled by the stratagem.

"I see the pretext, but where is the cause?" said he to Lucien, while the bark flew over the water.

"Well," said Lucien embarrassed, "did not it seem to you that they put sufficient impertinence into their language and tone towards me?"

"They put in too much; and that is why I believe the cause may be found at the villa Orso."

When they had passed the extreme frontier of the kingdom of Naples, they landed in a solitary cove where a Roman landing-waiter was sleeping in the moonlight.

The custom-house officer opened his eyes; Charles closed them again with a handful of *baiocci.*

"I give you my word that he will not waken again," said he; "you can now slaughter yourselves with neatness and despatch."

The rivals took off their coats; Rafael first engaging himself against Lucien.

The lieutenant of the Queen's Dragoons had the reputation, in his regiment, of being an excellent swordsman; Lucien did not understand much about fencing, but he had a brave heart, a cool head and a strong arm, which singularly equalized the chances of the duel.

Whilst they were desperately fencing, Charles Sheldon took the captain of the guard aside and said to him, in a cheery sort of way:

"I can guess pretty near what has brought you to the Pope's dominions. If you will allow me to take the part of one of the compatriots of my best friend, whom marriage has made Italian, I request you to cross sword with me."

Antonio seemed to hesitate.

"I ask it so that this business may be more promptly concluded," added Charles, "and so that we may be sure to arrive in good time to see the new opera to be produced at San Carlo's to-night."

This last reason proved a decisive one with the captain, and the two immediately engaged in combat.

Max de Rheiss and Orlando Zacari looked interestedly on. The land-waiter was meanwhile

calculating, how many ducats he could have in his *baiocci.*

The fight did not last long; the two Neapolitans were too much enraged in heart to ensure keen vision; they paid for their impatient hate with wounds, and the skiff turns its agile prow towards Naples.

Chapter V.

Charles Sheldon's portrait.—At San Carlo.—Intimates conversation between Lucien and Madame de Noirmoutiers.—A dangerous word.—Madame d'Astouans' letter to her cousin Lucien.—What was said concerning the marchioness during the evening party which took place at the palace of the Prince of Cassaro.—"Have you any enemies?"—A perfidious note.—Lucien escapes from death.—The bandit Gaspard.—Lucien at the marchioness' house.—The avowal.—An original lover.—"Give me my equal and I will love."—Nothing and all.

As there had been no breach of peace, the police closed their eyes to the wounds of the two officers who, however, were not seriously hurt; but all the town was set in commotion by the incident, and the adventure of Don Hermengildo was forgotten.

Whilst the gossip and chatter were keeping tongues busy, Lucien frequently saw Madame de Noirmoutiers. To describe briefly the effect

she had on him, it is only necessary to say that he did not regret the *Boulevard des Italiens*. After her, the person he most associated with, was Charles Sheldon, for whom he had acquired a sincere affection, notwithstanding that he was perfectly aware of his projects; but such feelings affect the human heart, which may be subdued by trifling attentions, if we could only understand when and how to bestow them.

Upon a supple body, active, vigorous and graceful, Charles carried a head whose charming sweep almost insensibly recalled the Endymion of GERARD. To this beauty, which will ever be considered a divine gift, notwithstanding whatever sickly and misshapen people may say, the American tourist added many other advantages; he had a delicate and rapturous spirit, an unalterable cheerfulness, an unbounded generosity, and with as much audacity in his character as to be an unbeliever in the impossible. At the most, he could only be reproached with a jeering scepticism which caused him to ridicule everything: he denied even the truth of the sentiments that he apparently accepted as genuine from other parties, and he was not sure of those motives which prompted his most serious actions; but he maintained his theories with such

humorous originality, that people could not feel incensed even when he hit hardest, and a great many persons believed that he represented himself to be a great deal worse than he really was.

Lucien, who had a susceptible heart and one open to belief, with a temperament inclining to melancholy, bore with this character wonderfully well, perhaps for the contrast it made with his own. They were, besides, intimate friends, and both young; Charles who knew Naples as if he had inhabited it for twenty years, explained to Lucien its mysteries so cheerfully that the latter never grew tired of listening to him.

Sheldon's conversation was lively, sparkling, and as clever as *a chronique* in any of the Parisian boulevard journals, and, thanks to it, he was welcome in every drawing room.

But if Charles spoke much, Lucien spoke but little. Madame de Noirmoutiers was astonished to find him so little animated in conversation, she, who was accustomed to the highest flights of hyperbole in the language of an amorous vocabulary. As he had given proof of some spirit, she could not account for his reserve on the grounds of inability, and she felt strangely annoyed at the little use he made of the adjectival language of passion. Wherever he met

her, he bestowed the tenderest courtesy and most careful attentions upon her; but she wanted more than that.

One night while in her box, at San Carlo's, the conversation turned on the qualities that a lover could and would most desire in his mistress. Upon so delicate a text, we leave the reader to imagine what metaphors and fine illustrations embellished the conversation of the company. Their pictures were mirrors, in which Madame de Noirmoutiers saw her image reflected. Lucien, who despised this kind of flattery, remained mute.

When the company broke up, Madame de Noirmoutiers, filled with indignation, turned towards him:

"Is it that because you do not think me either graceful or pretty," said she to him, "that you keep so discreetly silent in such a discussion?"

"Quite the contrary, I assure you," exclaimed Lucien, astonished at this abrupt attack.

"That is, at least, one trifling assurance to the *contrary*, but you say it in a tone which proves to me that you do not think it."

"But, madam, what could make you believe that I had such execrable taste?"

"Everything, it seems to me: your silence,

your seeming disdain, the care you take never to bestow in your conversation with me a loving phrase, a tender word. Have you ever perceived if I have fine eyes and a well formed waist? Do you know if I sing sweetly—if I dance with grace? If you were asked if I had any wit, you would not positively know what answer to give, except, however, your ideas on this may be such that you could not politely venture to manifest them; and I am forced to believe that your opinion is an unfavorable one, since you do not give yourself the trouble to let me even suspect the contrary."

Lucien was dumfounded. Madame de Noirmoutiers spoke with extreme vivacity, and with her pretty eye-brows knitted and her adorable mouth pouting, she afforded a study for an artist.

"You see, you concealed yourself," continued she, whilst Lucien wondered at her; but she now smiled, because she understood whence his silence proceeded.

"Will you believe me, madam, if I tell you that my silence was caused by the fear that I might express too candidly the sentiments your presence excited in me?"

"Not at all; it is undoubtedly an ingenious

method of getting out of a difficulty ; but it is a worn out one, and I assure you it will need many other things to convince me."

"It is nevertheless the truth, madam ; but it is truth's misfortune not to be believed."

"Could you not speak without stirring up the flame with which you threaten me?"

"No, madam, there are certain things that we cannot converse on coldly ; and I feel that if I give myself up to the charms that all breathe when near you and which your person exhales as a perfume, I will express a different sentiment from admiration. It is because I feel too much perhaps, that I do not tell enough."

"How!" exclaimed the marchioness, "you will try to make me believe that if you have kept silent, it is because you were disposed to love me?"

"No, madam," answered Lucien with a serious voice.

"Ah!" ejaculated the marchioness, turning her eyes upon him in great astonishment.

"You use a word which expresses a serious thing, and we speak too lightly of it to employ it in a chattering which the first duetto will efface from your memory. Besides, the love which I feel is of a nature so peculiar," added the young

man with a smile, "so it is quite impossible that it should exist between us."

"It is then a love made to your image," said she; "something highly original?"

"It has, at least, the merit of not being very common; but, indeed, I do not know how to explain it to you."

"Is it then so very strange?"

"No, but it is very embarrassing."

"Here is the prima donna who sings her cavatina; I will give her one ear, and risk the other to you, so that I shall only partly hear your dangerous confidences."

"Be it so; but I must go afterwards."

"Take advantage of this trill and speak."

"Well then! madam, my love does not inflame itself with hope, but is fired with remembrance."

Lucien glided to the door. Madame de Noirmoutiers timidly turned her head towards him; she seemed still to interrogate him with her looks; but the actress had ceased to sing, and as he passed the threshold of the *loge*, he saw a rose veil conceal in its nice teints the shoulders and the neck of the marchioness, who lowered her eyes as he politely bowed to her.

Immediately after his arrival at Naples, M.

de Varny, found himself so irresistibly blended with the existence of Madame de Noirmoutiers, that the recollection of the past appeared to him as a confused dream. It seemed to him that he had only seriously begun to live, from the day that he had stopped at the *osteria* of the *Arms of England.* His letters were filled with this disposition of mind, and M. de Villaines congratulated himself on the conversion of his nephew, who promised to be to France a successor of M. DE TALLEYRAND. Madame d'Astouans, who was also in correspondence with Lucien, saw more distinctly through the affair, and did not allow herself to be caught by this recently-born enthusiasm for diplomacy.

"*Your first letter, dear cousin,*" wrote madam to him, one day, "*contained the name of Madame de Noirmoutiers twice; I smiled. Your second letter mentioned it four times; I then suspected. But your third epistle presented it six times to my eyes; I have no more doubts whatever.*"

One night, in an assembly at the palace of the prince of Cassaro, then prime-minister, Charles, Lucien and their Neapolitan acquaintances, met in the galleries where the most aristocratic set was promenading.

Lucien, supporting himself against the railing, was looking into the adjoining drawing-room.

"I believe there is something in this contemplation," said Charles, offering his hand, "there is a magnetic current which commences with white shoulders, yonder, and finishes with a lover, here."

M. de Varny, taken unawares, reddened.

"Oh! do not answer," remarked Mr. Sheldon, smiling, "you will tell me a lie."

"If I would make a confidant, would it be to you that I should be likely to address myself?" said Lucien, striving to dissimulate his annoyance.

"Why not?"

"Do you remember what you have yourself confessed to me?"

"Perfectly. But no matter! my rivalry is not of a sullen nature. Am I fool enough to pretend that your dear countrywoman does not appear beautiful to other persons as well as to myself? Love her if it is your fancy, and try and be loved by her, and I shall give my applause to the conqueror."

"So little of jealousy!"

"I have no taste for the consequences of such

folly! And then, shall I tell you that? I am a little similar to LAROCHEFOUCAULD, that wise man who loved like a fool! I think we can meet a woman who has not had any lovers; but I maintain there is no one who has had only one."

"Stop!" said Lucien peremptorily, "your sceptical coolness horrifies me."

Mr. Sheldon stared astoundedly at him.

"What have *you* suffered that you have become so cold a philosopher?" added the secretary.

"Not much of anything, indeed; I have seen many people and have observed a little. But let me tell you, my dear fellow, that if you, a secretary of an embassy, are pleased to undertake gallantry as a serious affair, it must be because you are curious to taste hell on earth."

Lucien lowered his head.

"Well; you do not say a word; that tells me very eloquently that you have already put your foot there. Ah! you devote to this dear coquette the honors of a passion! At the pace you are going, you will not go far enough or you will go too far."

As he was still speaking, Horace Didier, the painter, came and threw himself giddily into the conversation:

"I was sure of it," said he, "you are both enamored with Madame de Noirmoutiers. Like the Athenian who was tired of hearing the populace call ARISTIDES *the Just*, I begin to be weary of hearing her called *the Divine.*"

"Let us have a little less haughtiness!" exclaimed Charles, laughing, "it is not so long ago, my dear painter, that your brush, your pallette and your heart were at the feet of the marchioness."

"And I do not intend to deny that; I adored her as an artist."

"Was it love of the art that made you sigh in her boudoir and walk under her balcony?"

"Undoubtedly; I saw in her a beautiful model to hang up in the Louvre. The proof, gentlemen, is that I have asked her the favor to sit for me upon a divan, as the Princess Borghese did for CANOVA."

"You have proposed it to her?" exclaimed Lucien.

"Certainly, yes."

"And what answer did she give you?'

"She hesitated at first; there is some artist's blood in the veins of this woman; but the thought of the world came to darken the poetry of my proposition, and she finished by refusing. You

lost then a Venus of the ALBANE, gentlemen, signed Horace Didier."

Lucien was going away, his heart full of emotion, when the artist laid his hand on his arm and stopped him.

"One word, M. de Varny, I pray you; if I had known your address I should have been at your house sometime ago."

"At my house! and why, sir?"

"Have you any enemies?"

"I am not aware that I have."

"Then, you have some. Be on your guard when you find yourself at night on the streets; there are some folks in town who have a grudge against your life."

"Who told you that?"

"My ears: I heard yesterday a conversation between a scoundrel with a forbidding face and a man dressed as a fisherman, but whose appearance and manner proved him to belong to a higher grade of society than that of a toiler of the deep, from which it is evident to me there is some evil in store for you."

"What did they say?"

"I heard but little, but I caught the words: *Lucien*, *stiletto* and *ducats*. This trilogy seemed to me to be of dismal augury. Take good care of yourself, M. de Varny."

"Thank you, sir."

When he left the palace of the prince of Cassaro, Lucien had already forgotten the advice of the artist. Just as he was about to enter his own house a footman, whose livery was disguised under a large cloak, slipped a note into his hand.

Lucien opened the billet, which contained only these words:

"*I have just arrived from the ball; a letter given me obliges my instant recourse to a friend; I have thought of you. Do I act wrong in obeying the voice which suggests to me your name? Come immediately; do not lose a moment, and you will then know what is expected of you:* "TH. DE N."

M. de Varny kissed the initials, and quickly directed his steps towards the mansion of the marchioness. Some dark and tortuous streets separated their residences. His mind was too full of the thought as to what could she want of he whom she was pleased to call her friend, to suspect any wrong. However, after turning two or three lanes, he thought he observed a shadow following his steps, keeping close to the houses. He thought, at first, that it was some lazzaroni in good *luck*; then he suddenly remembered the words of Horace Didier. In crossing a nar-

row place, where the clearness of the Italian night was as transparent as our twilight, he lost sight of the shadow; but as he walked through an angular street, he saw it again, gliding along a wall, and then it vanished. Lucien had no arms, but he was confident and brave; he took the middle of the street, but closely watched the dark sinuosities of the walls. A man was squatted in a corner where the gloom was heavy. As Lucien went by, the man sprang out and his arm, carrying a gleaming stiletto, descended; but M. de Varny quickly sprang aside; and the weapon buried itself in his cloak. Seizing the bandit by the throat and waist at the same moment, Lucien threw him down. In falling, the assassin released his stiletto; Lucien, who was as agile as vigorous, picked it up and placed its sharp point to the breast of the villain:

"I will kill you if you move," he said to him.

"*Per Bacco!*" gasped the assassin, "you hold me in such a manner as to prevent all such inclination; your fingers are of iron."

Lucien loosened the hand that was strangling the bandit.

"Take care of yourself. If you stir you are dead," said he.

"I will not stir."

"You promise not to do so?"

"I swear it to you!"

"An oath! I like something else better."

"By the faith of a bandit!"

"I accept; rise up!"

Touched by this proof of confidence, the bandit rose up and stood with his arms folded, motionless, in front of Lucien.

"You can now lead me to the *bargello's*," said he, "if it seems good to you; it is your right."

"I know it," returned Lucien, "but I shall not use it."

"*Oime!*" ejaculated the wonder-struck ruffian, "you are a noble cavalier! It would have been a pity had I killed you. It is evidently Saint Gaspard, my patron, who has caused me to fail."

"Who paid you to try to murder me?" demanded Lucien.

The bandit put his hand into his pointed beard.

"I have received some money, I must keep secret about it," said he after a minute meditation; "if I spoke, it would not be fair...Guess it, if you can."

"I will consider it directly; take this, save yourself; I heard a patrol."

"What is this you give me?"

"A few ducats; you must not lose your time for nothing."

The bandit looked stupified at Lucien for a second, then, with a great oath, exclaimed:

"You are a splendid lord! If ever you have any need of Gaspard the dragoon, write to the *osteria* of the Great-Saint-James, close by Portici, and if I am not dead, count on me; you need only have to place your enemy within the range of my rifle."

"Thank you, I have my sword," replied Lucien scornfully.

"As you will. my lord, but it is all the same; if you do not write to me, I have an idea that an opportunity will be found to pay you back, some day or other."

His encounter with the bandit made Lucien conceive some serious doubts as to the authenticity of the note signed "Th. de N." The night was passing on; he would adjourn his visit till the next day.

The following day he presented himself before Madame de Noirmoutiers, to whom he gave the mysterious note.

"What means this practical joke?" said the marchioness.

"It is a joke that has seriously injured my mantle," answered Lucien, and he gave her the account of his encounter with Gaspard.

Madame de Noirmoutiers shivered at the narration of the danger which Lucien had so narrowly escaped.

"It is a lesson," added M. de Varny; "it is what we gain when we have the conceit to believe that we can be ranked amongst your friends."

The marchioness presented him her hand; he kissed it, but he replied:

"I should have understood that, as I could not appreciate your exact value, it was folly and presumption for me to wish to be ranked amongst your friends. Must I acknowledge to you that my joy was so great on first reading this paper, that in my rapture I pressed it to my lips, so much of foolishness is there sometimes in even the most sober men? But confess to me, in your turn, what you would have thought had I been killed; would you not have said that it was only what I deserved? 'The fop!' you would say, 'why did he imagine that he was in a position to do a service to me, to me! the marchioness de Noirmoutiers, who keeps Naples under her feet?' And, perhaps, in sounding the bottom of your heart, you would even feel a secret satisfac-

tion in my permanent retirement. Firstly, I did not admire you enough, and next, the death of a man killed for a young lady's sake would weave around her handsome forehead a crown which, though doleful, would not be less glorious."

Whilst Lucien was speaking, in animated tones, without being conscious of it, Madame de Noirmoutiers kept her head inclined upon her breast. When he concluded, she raised it up; her eyes suffused with tears.

"You are cruel, M. de Varny; what have I done to give you this opinion of my heart? and why do you accuse me of such callousness?"

"Because I LOVE YOU!" answered Lucien, pale with suppressed emotion.

At those words, which were as pleasing to her ear as sweet music, Madame de Noirmoutiers became a woman again. Her tears, limpid pearls upon a rosy cheek, stopped themselves at the smiling corners of her mouth.

"YOU LOVE ME!" said she; "Ah! the remembrance has allowed itself then to be conquered by hope?"

"I have no hope, madam, and that proves how I love you; and if I may be daring enough to form a wish, it will be that this love may find you ever insensible to its passion."

"Ah!" observed madam, "it is some more originality I may expect, is it?"

"It is a serious prayer, yet may it please God that this love, as it has had no past, may have no future."

"I imagine," said Madame de Noirmoutiers with an expression which imperfectly concealed her vexation, "that I have in this affair as much concern as God, and I can give you this comforting consolation that your prayer will be heard favorably. I shall use all my endeavors at least, and I think it will not be necessary to make a great exertion, sir."

"I hope not, madam. However the future does not belong to us, and I am certain that if you loved me one day, this divine happiness would be paid by eternal despair. Now, I confess to you, I have some fear."

"Be easy; I have no interest in tormenting you."

"Oh! madam, are you ignorant that a woman's heart is a labyrinth where chance keeps the thread?"

"I shall so act that it will not go astray."

"I pray you may, for if I were to pick it up, it would become fatal to me."

"Other men then have not this fear," said

the marchioness, becoming more and more annoyed.

"Pardon me, madam, but you constrain me almost to tell you what is loathsome: it is that nobody loves you as I do."

"You were right in keeping this from me, for what you now tell me is very common and very much worn out."

"I know it; all men have the presumption to believe that they love better than anyone else in the world; but the one that you shall love, whoever he may be, will be the victim of a fatality which is in yourself and which has its source in your pride."

"Oh! really!"

"You adore yourself too much to love long."

"Give me my equal, and I will love!" said she proudly, fixing upon Lucien her eyes, sparkling with anger.

"Woe be, then, to the one who shall realize this dream of your heart!" added Lucien with a smile full of sadness. "Your love will be like Vesuvius, much lava, then ashes. The dream shall come from heaven, but on awaking you will shatter the idol."

"It is said that it was in the power of CLEOPATRA to find kings who would sacrifice their

thrones to reign one day near her, and who, at even such a price, would not have regretted it. You suppose I have the pride of CLEOPATRA, allow me, M. de Varny, to have all her presumption."

"From you, madam," gently replied Lucien, suddenly altering his manner and language and taking her white hand which she let him kiss without making too much resistance, "from you, madam, we accept everything, even forgetfulness."

"Would it be because it carried away the idea of the past?" answered Madame de Noirmoutiers, flattered into better humor by Lucien's last remark.

Lucien kept silent, but his looks spoke more eloquently than his tongue could have done.

Never had the marchioness felt so agitated as she did after this visit, and the conversation which followed it. She kept going in and out of her room, now irritated, then smiling, humming a cavatina or letting her snowy fingers run along the ivory keys of the piano; she would call her maid to dress her and then send her back abruptly; look at her face in the mirror, then put on and take off half-a-dozen night-caps; draw her hand across her burning forehead and complain of the cold. At last, weary and faint,

she threw herself on a settee, and, closing her eyes, fell into a deep revery such as never yet had disturbed her joyful heart.

Of what was she thinking?—She thought of nothing and of everything; or of what can be best translated by these words: SHE WAS THINKING OF HIM.

CHAPTER VI.

What La Toresilla was.—A meeting of friends.—Lucien embarks in a strange enterprise.—The actress' balcony.—How Lucien's adventure ended.—"Gentlemen, breakfast!"

AT this time there was a singer in Naples named La Toresilla, who was attached to San Carlo's theatre. She was a woman of average beauty, and of rather meagre ability. However, she caused considerable excitement, enjoyed a large following, and was, in some respects, the rival of Madame de Noirmoutiers in renown. This rivalry the noble marchioness did not acknowledge in any way, and when she did not notice it who else could? When she spoke of La Toresilla, it would be with a shrug of the shoulders and a look sovereignly disdainful. It would be hard to explain whence the fame of the singer

proceeded. Her expressionless face indifferent repartees and a voice of suspicious pureness were not worth the attention they so much engrossed. But there are in all large cities where foreigners, money and luxury abound, some of those queens of fashion whom fortune elevates, and accident immolates. They do not ask the cause; there is none: they are simply what they are, because they *are*. It was an adventure with a German duke that gave La Toresilla a reputation for intrigue; and, from that day, she firmly maintained the position in which she had placed herself, without really thinking of it.

This state of affairs had been going on for two or three years, when Lucien arrived in Naples. La Toresilla had eaten up the fortunes of two or three scions of families, and severely curtailed the patrimony of five or six noble travelers. The gilded youth of Naples and foreigners of distinction had introduced themselves at her house; because, like some actresses of times past and present she gave fine feasts and brilliant suppers. As a natural consequence, therefore, many paid court to her; but, most strange to say, very few were able to ingratiate themselves into her good graces. La Toresilla was, in her way, an eccentric person. Her position

had inflated her with great vanity, which led her to believe that she was worth the most marvellous sacrifices and the most gigantic efforts. It could be plainly seen by her manners that she reasoned to herself, like Madame de Noirmoutiers, whose reputation for beauty and wit made her despair. Men could ruin themselves to please her fancy, without attaining it ; the most costly cashmeres seemed to her only good enough to wipe her shoes. But, in revenge, they would succeed with her by a glance, a word, a gesture and those other unknown means which seem to affect the most invulnerable hearts of those women, who are corrupted by voluptuous habits. M. de Varny had been led to her house by Charles ; but although he had been perfectly well received, he returned there but seldom, notwithstanding that he was earnestly solicited to do so by Mr. Sheldon, who could not conceive how love could remove the idea of pleasure.

Now, it happened one night that Lucien being with a dozen other idlers at Max de Rheiss' residence, the conversation turned upon La Toresilla. They were at table, and by the number of empty bottles on the side-board, it could be easily seen that they had drunk plentifully.

The conversation showed the effects of their state of mind and of the subject of debate.

"To the devil with the proud minx!" cried Orlando the huntsman, "for a fortnight I have been courting her, and I am just as far advanced in her good graces as the first hour!"

"Let us clasp hands on that," chimed in Horace Didier; "with the licence of a domino at the carnival of Paris, I confess to you, although I am a painter, she actually made me *sit down* three days. As I was reproaching her to-day for her cruelty, telling her that between artists such a thing should not be done, she answered: "Of what then do you complain, yourself?" playing upon the words.

"I was near going farther," said Rafael Rasconti, eyeing Lucien, who had kept silent about their encounter and recent adventure, and who continued to meet him everywhere. "But the upshot of it was that, a caprice has undone what a caprice had accomplished."

"Tell us the caprice, almost happy lieutenant," said Lucien.

"A knot of jonquille ribbon had put me in favor with the signora; a knot of arrow lilac ribbon has caused her to close the door of her boudoir to me."

"This woman herself is a Gordian knot!" exclaimed Max, whose red face shone as the upper shell of a lobster."

"If the Bavarian makes wit, what will the Frenchman do?" said Charles.

"He will drink," remarked Max, emptying a bottle into the glass of his neighbor and then filling his own. "Can you believe that I, Max Baron de Rheiss, in one of those moments when the excited soul gives birth to the most chirmerical projects—"

"After dinner!" interrupted Lucien.

"At this hour, when we dream of the impossible," continued Max, "I offered my hand to La Toresilla."

"Your hand!" exclaimed Horace Didier, with assumed indignation, "the hand of a baron to this queen of side-scenes? But it was disparagingly, my dear fellow, and you did not think of the Holy-Empire!"

"Certainly, I had forgotten it," gravely answered Max, swallowing his glass at a gulp; "however she refused, telling me that all the baronies of Rheiss in the world, would not be sufficient to pay for her gallery of pictures."

"I have loved her," said Antonio, in his turn.

"They pretend that you were not even indifferent to her," added Charles.

"It is a slander. It is for want of a coat that I have not been happy."

"Explain the enigma!" cried several voices.

"You please me very much, said La Toresilla to me one night, and I am sure that I would love you, if you wore the Lancer's uniform." I changed to that regiment to please her, but when I presented myself in my new costume, she then loved only the Hussars."

"To whom does she belong?" asked Orlando.

"You should rather say: 'Who belongs to her?'" answered Charles.

"This must be understood everywhere," exclaimed the painter, "in Paris as in Naples."

"They spoke of a great personage, some *charge d'affaires* of the northern courts," said Rafael, "but as that personage belongs to deplomacy, let us not speak of him."

"Do not speak of him if you like," said Horace, "but let us supplant him."

"Pshaw!" said an attache of the Austrian legation, "to attempt, is to miscarry."

"I have lost by it twenty sonnets and ten days," observed an *Abbe.*

"I really do not perceive what difficulty there is in it," said Lucien, "for from what you say, I do not think La Toresilla so hard a conquest."

"Try," said Orlando.

"It would be a task the success of which would not repay me ; but it seems to me that if I was very anxious, I would not take so long a time as you have."

"You ! my dear friend," exclaimed Charles, "you, who are really the most captivating man in existence ! It is really a joke ! It is positively refreshing to know how charming you are in the eyes of the fair sex."

"You laugh at ourselves," said Rafael.

"Not at all, and I will make you see, if you care for it, that a secretary, reserved and unobtrusive though he be, can go farther than a dragoon."

"I challenge you on it !"

"I accept."

"Hurrah !" cried Max. "The vanquished will be at the expense of a dinner at Ginello's, the divine caterer. *Væ victis !*"

"How much time do you want ?" said Orlando.

"What will it please you to grant me ? A few days, if Max is not very hungry, or a few hours, if he is still thirsty ?"

"Choose !" said Charles.

"I will take a few hours, at least as I do not wish to waste time thinking about it."

"Agreed," said the painter. "If audacity is worth the victory, you will surely have it."

"When shall the attack begin?" asked Max.

"Instantly," answered Lucien.

"A moment, gentlemen," said Orlando just as all were rising up; "who will give us the proof of success?"

"La Toresilla, herself," replied Lucien. "Have you then lived so little in the world, as to have to learn that it is not the men who are indiscreet?".

"Let us do better," said Charles. La Toresilla was wearing to-night with the Assyrian cuirass, in *Semiramides*, a knot of purple ribbon round her waist; you know that she is accustomed to leave the theatre without undressing herself. The cuirass and the knot must be with her at her villa. Let M. de Varny bring us the knot, and we will accept it as an earnest of the feast."

"Be it so, gentlemen," said Lucien.

For a youth who had no pretentions to Don Juanism, Lucien came to embark in a singular adventure; but there is nothing more terrible, than, the way in which, reserved characters and timid hearts go quickly to the verge of extravagancy, when once they are pushed beyond their

accustomed limits. Moreover, the champagne had excited Lucien who was, at certain hours, capable of doing the most eccentric actions with the most surprising coolness. He had this evening talked much and mixed his wines ; Madame de Noirmoutiers had treated him badly enough during the day, and his love affair was also disturbing his mind.

They saw that he was in the best condition to carry his folly out to the end.

To tell the truth, he did not know himself how he would get out of it ; but he counted a little on his own ingenuity and much more on good fortune to aid him. Besides he knew that La Toresilla was of an eccentric disposition, and with women of this character the chapter of accidents is infinite.

So wrapping around him the cloak which he had worn to the ball previous to the supper, and rolling up a big pie in a flap of the robe, he gravely got down, saddled his horse and started out as resolutely as possible on his gallant expedition.

The company followed him across the country, each one ready to burst with laughter.

The night advanced ; a capricious breeze caused a white streak to undulate around the

summit of the antique Vesuvius ; the sea, reflecting the sparks, caressed the shore, and the clearness of the atmosphere was such, that one could hear the songs of the fishermen at a great distance off.

When they arrived near the villa, the cavalcade held counsel.

"In my quality of general-in-chief," said Lucien, "I dismiss my army and allow it to *rendez-vous* at the first inn."

"At the tavern yonder?" said Max, pointing with his finger to a house which bore on its front the symbolical branch of pine.

"Good luck!" said the troop as they turned their bridles.

Lucien, leapt over the space which separated him still from the gardens of the villa. A balcony ornamented with cases of flowers and where sparkled the light of a lamp, indicated to him the apartment of La Toresilla ; and towards this he directed his steps.

Two huge watch dogs began suddenly to bark in an alarming manner.

Lucien collected a few large stones and climbed upon the wall that enclosed the gardens. When the dogs saw him appear, a leg on this side and one on the other, they jumped towards

him, howling; Lucien took his pie and threw it as far as he could. The pie broke in falling, and the dogs, having tasted some pieces of it, found it so much to their liking, that they each took a part and carried it to their kennel.

"It is a somewhat mythological action," said Lucien to himself.

A man servant who was reclining close by was awakened by the noise; he got out from the nook where he was watching the espaliers of the actress; but when he saw, by the light of the stars, this black shadow astride the wall, he felt a trembling in the knees and his teeth commenced chattering.

As Lucien started to jump, his robe spread out, so as to give him the appearance of a figure of such large proportions, that the guard taking him for a spectre, crossed himself and ran as quick as he could, without uttering a word; fear having taken his breath away.

Lucien put back into his pockets the ducats he had drawn out.

When he found himself under the balcony, he became troubled; the dogs might come back and the servant arouse the house; he must make haste. At this moment, the light which glittered behind the window of La Toresilla began to

move. An invisible hand was conveying it hither and thither; then the mobile blinds half-opened, and a sweet voice cried into the night:

"Pablo! Pablo!"

Pablo was too frightened to answer; he was still running.

"Pablo!" repeated the voice, and a woman's head appeared with her hair streaming down.

"Pablo is gone away," said Lucien, showing himself.

"Oh!" exclaimed the lady, and she withdrew quickly.

"Let not the divine La Toresilla be frightened," said the adventurer, "he who speaks to you does not care to act the part of a bandit."

Lucien noticed the blind move; the lady was listening; fear yielding to curiosity. He continued:

"Calm yourself, madam, you need have no fear, it is a surprising adventure that brings me here, a marvellous adventure on which depends the honor of a gentleman. Hear me!"

"Who are you?" the actress said at last.

"Lucien de Varny."

"The secretary of the French embassy?"

"The same, *carrissima dona*."

"But, sir," said La Toresilla showing her

head, her neck and naked arms, "you are a fool; the dogs will devour you."

"That is what may happen to me shortly; but at present they are busy dispatching a pie I threw to them."

The actress began to laugh.

"Hark! do you hear them? they are fighting for what remains," continued he.

"Go then very quickly."

"That is not my business; and the service that I have to claim from your gracious kindness, what will become of it?"

"It will go with you and pay me a visit to-morrow."

"No; it is much better to ask your hospitality, now."

"This is a jest, M. de Varny," replied La Toresilla; but her voice was not an angry one.

The situation looked exceeding romantic and original to her; she thought of Almaviva and of Rosine.

"So," answered Lucien, "as you will not help me, heaven will."

He instantly made the best of a trellis placed against the wall, and catching the grape vine, clambered up towards the balcony, which he rapidly scaled.

The dogs were quickly on his heels; their sight inspired such a terror to LaToresilla, that she lowered her fine arms, and charitably helped M. de Varny up.

Lucien raised up the blind and penetrated into the apartment, which was illumined by a splendid Etruscan lamp of curious workmanship.

La Toresilla stood up in his presence, covered with a wrapper in which she had rapidly dressed herself, her naked feet were covered with velvet slippers, her hair half-unrolled floated on her shoulders, blushing, affectedly and gazing at him.

A charming confusion gave to the room of the actress a coquettish appearance; the costume of Arcacius was sparkling on a desk of ebony, above which smiled a divine madona of GUIDO. At the other end of the room, and as a companion to the madona, a Venus of TITIAN displayed its lewd proportions in a golden frame. The atmosphere was impregnated with the balsamic perfume of the orange and jasmine.

Lucien looked around him, forgetting the motive that brought him there; without thinking of it, he laid aside his cloak, and, throwing himself on an ottoman, he respired at full the warm and voluptuous air which filled the room.

La Toresilla anxiously waited ; at last, seeing that he did not speak, she decided to break the silence herself.

"I crave your pardon, M. de Varny, if I interrupt your reverie," said she ; "but can I know what brought you here and what you want ?"

Lucien, suddenly recalled to a recollection of his peculiar position, looked at her, and, without evincing astonishment, candidly answered :

"I know nothing of it, madam."

This was said with so simple an air and with so much good nature, that the singer, never thought of feeling vexed, but laughed heartily at his coolness.

Lucien let her laugh ; as it gave him time to reflect.

"And it is for this that you have left Naples in the middle of the night and in this costume ?" replied she, when her hilarity was at last appeased.

"My faith ! madam, we make some longer journeys for poorer results. Have I not seen you ?"

"But this great service, sir, this adventure on which was depending the honor of a gentleman ?"

"That will be a fable or a truth, just as you fancy."

"I think it would be more true to make a pretext of it?"

"As it pleases you. I will inform you then that being at table to-night with some friends, one of them, who is also your friend, Charles Sheldon, proved to me that I was amorous of you. To tell the truth I had not perceived it, but there is nothing so terrible as the evil we ignore."

"And that is why you are here?"

"I was anxious to be the first to impart to you this discovery."

"It is an attention for which I am infinitely obliged."

"I have not yet told you all. Shall I acquaint you with the accidental causes which decided this journey?"

"But, sir, you forget that it is late and that I want sleep."

"So much the better, my story will make you sleep."

We have said that Lucien had some wit, and that he was one of those diplomates who affect that frankness which is so serviceable in politics and in love. He, therefore, in keeping with this character, set himself to relate the story just as it occurred, not omitting any detail, neither his

boasting, or the bet which had followed it, or the pledge of success; but he did it with a wonderful impulse and admirable cheerfulness. LaToresilla had too much taste for the eccentric to be irritated against Lucien. She listened to him complaisantly, and carelessly abandoned her hand to him.

But, we must tell all; had Lucien possessed the wit of VOLTAIRE and the rapture of DIDEROT, he would have produced but very little effect upon the singer, if he had not had the reputation of being posted in the graces of Madame de Noirmoutiers who, as we know, was the *bete noire* of LaToresilla. The actress knew this; so, while M. de Varny was talking, she began to consider that it would be pleasant to raise her cicisbeo at the great lady. Such a thought ripened very fast in the head of such a woman after midnight; besides, Lucien seemed to her an original young man; his frankness was not according to the customs of a rake and gave her a high idea of the boldness of his character; she concluded by asking herself if it would not be better to let him win his bet.

A noise of voices whispering was heard in the garden; the limpid light of the alb filtrating through the blind.

"Madam," said Lucien smiling, "I will ascend my calvary, if you let me descend this balcony."

"Your friends are there?"

"They wait for me, and you will learn what you are still ignorant of—the manner in which they applaud a fall.

Lucien made one step towards the window. LaToresilla made a sign with her hand. He stopped. She raised herself, ran to the desk, lifted the blind and appeared at the balcony.

The troop, led by Max, saluted her with cheers.

La Toresilla bowed, placed her hand upon her heart as if she had been before an audience. Then, drawing the knot of purple ribbon off her breast, she threw it to them, crying: "Gentlemen, breakfast! M. de Varny thanks you."

Chapter VII.

The day after the victory.—Conversation between Madame de Noirmoutiers and Rafael Rasconti.—In the Abruzzo.—The storm; the hostelry; the bandits.—The aspect of the osteria.—The artist Horace Didier and *An encounter in the Abruzzo.*—Madame de Noirmoutiers sings with success the Puritani cavatina.—The highwayman Giacomo's justice.—Rafael Rasconti re-appears.—Departure from the Abruzzo.—The dangers of the road.—Gaspard and Rafael; the latter's death.—The re-entry in Naples.

BEFORE noon the next day, the adventure was known in every *cafe* and boudoir of Naples. Hawked about by scores of mouths everywhere, it had, in one hour, made the rounds of the town, and, as usually in the case with such stories, had assumed colossal proportions. It was spoken of at the Royal palace and at the theatre, at the business places and in the drawing-rooms. We leave the reader to imagine the manner of Lucien's reception, when he re-appeared in public; his entry to the banquet was a most enthusiastic and triumphant one. It rested only with himself to believe that he had grown to the stature of a RICHELIEU, and, had he been cursed with vanity, he would have lost his head in the midst of the commotion his presence caused.

He had, however, too easily discovered the causes of his easy victory to feel proud of it;

besides, the thought of Madame de Noirmoutiers troubled him and made the cup of flattery bitter to his lips. His triumph, instead of elating, grieved him, and Mr. Sheldon had little difficulty in guessing the truth in the midst of the torrent of words with which Lucien tried to shake off his after thoughts.

"You are afraid," said Sheldon, "and your own laurels will prevent you sleeping."

"You are a rival to whom I can avow this thing," answered Lucien; "yes I have a fear. What will this triumph bring to me?"

"Who knows that! The marchioness is of a character to lead astray all the Œdipuses of psychology. Are you lost? Are you saved? Serious questions! Perhaps you are neither saved, nor lost."

"What am I then?"

"Nothing; what you were yesterday. Madame de Noirmoutiers stands upon so high a pedestal, that from her elevation it is possible that she does not see LaToresilla."

That very night, Lucien met the marchioness at the hotel of the English embassador; all the ladies were whispering and looking at him. M. de Varny bore his triumph as an affliction; Madame de Noirmoutiers only seemed to know

nothing; she received him with the same grace and spoke to him with the same intimacy. Lucien felt annihilated under her magnificent disdain; he had counted upon a little bit of spite and he met the most absolute indifference. This night, then, the kind regard of the marchioness dispelled all his hopes. For a moment he wrestled with the idea that this indifference was affected; in the midst of the ball a word extinguished this last gleam of hope in the heart of Lucien.

"There is much talk of a romantic adventure, M. de Varny," said she to him, "that you have had with LaToresilla, the fame of which has spread far and wide. You will please relate it to me to-morrow."

These words were uttered with so calm a voice, with such quiet regard, so easy a smile, that Lucien was at a loss what answer to give.

"Proud as Prometheus!" said he, following her with his eye, as she left the drawing-room. Charles told the truth. LaToresilla has no existence in her eyes.

It will be thought perhaps that Lucien's mortification was caused by ill disguised pride. The majority of men are affected by this feeling, but they are generally able to conceal more discreetly their stronger passions, excited no

doubt by the striking examples of vanity they receive from their dear consorts.

But what became of Lucien the following day, when Madame de Noirmoutiers heard his story with all the manifestations of the liveliest amusement, as if it had concerned a man who had not loved her and whom she had not known.

"I have not even affected the surface of this heart," said Lucien sadly to himself.

The marchioness roused him from his revery to ask him if his new amour would prevent him accepting an invitation, that she had thought of extending to him since a short time ago. It was to go, with a congenial company, to visit one of her estates in the Abruzzo, some thirty leagues distant from Naples.

"The country is picturesque," said she to him; "you will find there a savage population, interesting to curious travelers, and plenty of game. We shall stay there a few days, and Naples will seem to you more ravishing on your return."

Lucien accepted.

"But have you no fear," remarked madam, "that LaToresilla will forget you during your absence?"

"It is my wish."

"Why?"

Lucien took the marchioness' hand and carried it to his lips.

Madame deNoirmoutiers guessed his thought.

"Oh!" said she "no matter! the day that I shall abdicate, I know that the empire will wholly belong to me. Can LaToresilla be a rival?"

But, as is the case with women, Madame de Noirmoutiers told the truth, but not *all* the truth.

The excursion which she had projected, to take place in a few weeks was hastened on, immediately after Lucien's freak was noised abroad. On hearing this news, she felt a certain emotion which though was not lively enough to manifest itself by exterior signs but which, nevertheless made her anxious to leave Naples. She would have been unable to define the motive that inspired her, but she obeyed it without reflection, and M. de Varny's acceptance greatly affected her.

The abruptness of the marchioness' departure disconcerted the plans of those who should have accompanied her, and it was found, when all was ready, that the company was reduced to a lady relative, to a big baron who held a position in the king's household, to his wife, to Horace Didier and to Lucien de Varny. Max de Rheiss, Char-

les Sheldon, Orlando Zacari and a few ladies promising to join them in a few days.

Madame de Noirmoutiers seemed agitated on getting into the carriage; an unusual flush reddened her cheeks. Lucien asked her the reason of her emotion.

"It is nothing," said she, "I come to do myself justice." And then remained silent.

Madame de Noirmoutiers sometimes answered in a manner which precluded further question.

There was, however, more in her emotion than the justice of which she spoke.

She had had, a few days before, an exciting conversation with Rafael Rasconti, who, availing himself of a few attentions and perhaps also of some slight enticements that the marchioness had bestowed upon him as well as to other people without perceiving anything particular in them herself, had been willing to make the most of what he called his rights.

Madame de Noirmoutiers had much laughed at his presumption; but the name of Lucien having been mentioned in the conversation with some insolence, the marchioness, without taking pains to justify herself, had been compelled to dismiss the lieutenant of the Queen's dragoons.

One or two letters had followed this explana-

tion, and Madame de Noirmoutiers, tired at last of a correspondence which was assuming in some respects a bullying tone, had solicited from the minister of war an order for the removal of Rafael. She was too securely placed in court affairs not to obtain what she wanted, and Rafael, one morning, received a ministerial note ordering him to start for Palerma where he should thereafter have to keep garrison.

Rafael could not have the order revoked, but in tracing back the source of his misfortune, he guessed from where the blow that struck him came. The very same day of the marchioness' departure he had met her and plainly expressed his indignation at her conduct.

The marchioness eyed him proudly from head to foot.

"I did not at first recognize you, sir," said she; "it seemed to me that I had solicited from M. Rafael Rasconti the honor of not seeing him any more."

Rafael turned pale as a corpse.

" And I tell you," cried he with a voice choking with anger, "that you shall see me again and sooner and nearer than you may believe."

It was after this short scene that the marchioness got into her carriage.

The company had assembled but a few days at the castle of Abruzzo, when Horace Didier proposed to pay a visit to a cascade said to be a very fine one and which was situated at a distance of four or five leagues in a wild district of which goatherds and their goats were the only inhabitants.

They started early, the painter with some brushes, Lucien with a rifle to shoot partridges, the ladies with their parasols, the big baron with his cross. The cascade was so very picturesque, that nobody regretted the hardships of the excursion when, as frequently happens in mountainous countries, a storm obliged the whole party to seek shelter in a wretched cottage, which was used as a sheep-fold and an inn, and which had its four walls miserably built in the hollow of a dale.

An old matron and her son kept the hostelry, which received all its profits from artists drawn there by the savage beauty of the country, and from shepherds who came there to tend their flocks.

There is nothing to put people, who have no care, in good temper like an accident. Madame de Noirmoutiers accepted the storm as an adventure. They laid out the food upon a tripod,

plundered the stable and the inner-yard to get some milk and eggs, lit an Homeric fire, and each one endeavored to make the situation appear as trifling as possible.

General cheerfulness prevailed in the hostelry when suddenly the door was rudely opened, and a tall scoundrel of athletic form and dressed in the traditional costume of the *Fra Diavolo* Calabrian, appeared on the threshold. The matron, who was cooking an omelette, did not release the hold of the frying-pan; neither did her son, who was plucking some black-birds, disturb himself; it was evident they were accustomed to these kind of visits. At the same instant, the two or three roughly executed windows in the walls were burst in upon their rusty hinges, and faces surmounted by conical hats were thrust into the hall.

At the sight of these new-comers, who might be very honest people, although their costumes were anything but comforting, Lucien would have sprung to his rifle; but the man who was watching the door prevented him, and M. de Varny, who had only his naked hands for weapons, was obliged to retreat before a large knife whose point was glittering within three inches of his breast.

"Hold! my master," said the brigand who seemed to be the chief, and who wore very fine silk ribbons in his black hat, "you have a very hasty hand for a Neapolitan."

"I am a Frenchman," answered Lucien.

"I should have guessed it; my compatriots are more peaceful. By Saint-James my defender, it is not your fault that my head was not in close quarters with the bullet of this musket."

Lucien no longer listened to the bandit's remarks but searched his pockets, for a pair of pistols he had brought to exercise his skill against the magpies. He took one out and, without taking time to aim, fired. The bullet passed through the chief's hat.

"Heavens! then you are determined to shoot me!" cried the chief; and, prompt as a flash, he enacted from M. de Varny's hand the other pistol which he was in the act of raising.

"Let us leave these playthings," continued he, "we may injure ourselves."

Lucien grew pale with rage and searched with his eyes for a weapon; a suppliant look of Madame de Noirmoutiers stopped him, just as he was about to throw himself on the throat of the bandit.

The hostelry presented at this moment a sin-

gular spectacle. The matron occupying herself with their eggs ; the son despoiling the thrushes after the black-birds; he was quite sure that some one would eat them ; the kinswoman of the marchioness, good old lady who following the traditions of the Empire, had prudently fainted ; the baron was rolling his thumbs around each other and opening his large eyes ; his wife was inhaling some salts and meditating an hysterical attack in a corner ; Horace Didier, who courted her at the castle, forgetting her spasms, cut a pencil and was preparing to sketch the scene which he had under his eyes : the artist prevailing over the lover ; Lucien was boiling with rage ; Madame de Noirmoutiers clinging to his hand, pale, horrified ; the bandit looking at both, twisting his head and smiling ; while his comrades waited, with their hands upon their long rifles.

"My faith!" at last said the chief advancing towards Lucien, "you are a gallant young man, and I like courage. However, you have been more fortunate than you think in having missed your mark, signor Frenchman ; because if you had killed me, your doom had been sealed, and there would not have been a single one of your party left alive to tell at Naples how the thing happened."

"Madame de Noirmoutiers shuddered; the baroness entirely fainted."

"But you have only injured my hat," continued the chief, "and I will think no more of it, so shake hands: you can do it without any fear; this hand never strikes backward, it only relieves here and there some big post-chaises off Englishmen, and that is not a great sin."

Lucien had the wonderful faculty of accommodating himself to circumstances, when he understood that it was not in his power to modify them; he therefore took the hand of the bandit and shook it with evident friendliness.

"Very well," said the other, "this is what may be called acting like a gentleman."

"Here it is done!" cried Horace Didier with the joy of a child, and taking his paper, he ran towards the bandit.

"Do you recognize yourself, my brave?" said he to him displaying under his eyes a sketch vigorously drawn. It was the osteria with its groups variously massed; the artistic fidelity was striking.

"The picture is not bad," said the chief, with the gravity of a *connaiseur emerite.*

"This then is what you were occupying yourself with, yonder, on that roost?" added he de-

signating with his finger an old trunk on which Horace had been seated.

"And I imagine that I have not lost my time! What a painting for the coming exposition at the Louvre, with this inscription underneath: *An encounter in the Abruzzo!*"

"Certainly you must be a Frenchman too?" said the bandit.

"France is my country, it will ever be!" answered the artist in an elated tone.

"We will dine more gayly; because I imagine that you will grant us the honor of partaking of our slender meal," replied the chief.

They could not reasonably refuse a proposition made in this manner; the cover was soon spread, and all the inmates of the hostelry sat around the table. The baroness had recovered her senses just as a bandit was about to throw a jar of water upon her head. The old lady imitated her example.

Madame de Noirmoutiers also regained all her cheerfulness; but, to tell the truth, it was only a feverish cheerfulness. Although she did not realize exactly what was the particular danger menacing her, she understood instinctively that an unknown peril threatened her. Waiting till it would reveal itself, she talked and laughed.

"You have made," said she to the chief, "a poor expedition." And with the end of her rosy fingers she drew from her pocket a very small purse which she dangled before the bandit. "You will not count this adventure amongst your fortunate ones."

"This good fortune does not concern me," said the chief, "and I nearly regret having undertaken it. However, an honest bandit must keep by his word."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Lucien.

"You will learn it very soon!"

"I hope that it won't bring any harm to this young lady?"

"It is not me at least who will do her any injury; but, between ourselves, I believe that they wish her too much good."

"Who will dare this?" cried Lucien his eyes sparkling with indignation.

"Well now! Will you make yourself angry because they had eyes to see what you looked upon so complaisantly yourself? Instead of contending about things which have not yet happened, I believe we will do better to sing; there is yonder a mandoline, and my pretty neighbor will I hope consent to draw from it some romance for us."

"Willingly," said Madame de Noirmoutiers, who was anxious above all things to avoid a quarrel between Lucien and the bandit.

She took the instrument from the hands of the chief and began to sing the cavatina in *Il Puritani*.

Her voice, beautiful and expressive all at once, raised in the *osteria* with a power that emotion seemed to augment. The bandits were inciting her with their looks, and all the chivalry of their ardent nature, endowed with musical sentiment, were aroused by this song which filled the hall with passionate melody.

When Madame de Noirmoutiers stopped, some frantic *huzzahs* broke out. The chief broke his glass against the wall.

"That Saint-James may strangle the cursed Neapolitan who has paid me to perform what I have done!" cried he with violence. But the noise of his voice was lost in the uproar of applause.

"*Ancora! Ancora!*" cried the bandits with enthusiasm.

"Be it so!" again answered the marchioness exalted with her own triumph.

"What courage!" said Lucien, "and how I admire you, madam!"

"Oh!" replied she, "this courage is but the effects of terror, it is the delirium of fear. And now, this *furia* intoxicates me; they do not ap-applaud like this at San Carlo's!"

As she was concluding the *aria* of the *Lucia* in the midst of a tempest of applause, a bandit stepped in.

"What! signor Frenchman, you here?" said he coming close to Lucien.

It was Gaspard the dragoon.

Lucien related to him in a few words what had transpired. Gaspard listened to him attentively.

"By the horns of the devil!" said he, "this will end better than it has begun." And he went straight to the chief.

The two bandits conferred together. Lucien and Madame de Noirmoutiers understanding that their fate depended on this moment's decision. The chief and Gaspard talked animatedly, looking occasionally at both of them; the eyes of the marchioness and of Lucien also met, and those of the marchioness were so sweet, that M. de Varny was even anxious that the peril should be prolonged, fearing to see his happiness vanish with the danger.

At last, the chief went toward them.

"You have," said he to Lucien, "given life to this man who is one of mine; after what I have seen of your boldness, your generosity does not astonish me, but it deserves a reward, and you will get it as good as you can wish. For you, madam," added he turning toward the marchioness, "you deserve something better than the fate which was reserved for you. What Gaspard has revealed to me, and what I have perceived myself, leads me to understand why the same Neapolitan is anxious at the same time to have your life, signor Frenchman, and your liberty, charming dona. But you will see how Giacomo the bandit metes out justice."

On a sign from the chief, Gaspard disappeared out of the *osteria*. Horace Didier again seized his pencils.

An instant later, Gaspard re-entered, conducting Rafael Rasconti.

"The infamous scoundrel!" shouted Lucien, and he was going to rush upon the Neapolitan, when Giacomo stopped him.

"This does not concern you yet," said he; "here I command and I must be obeyed. Later and further on you may do as you please."

Then, turning towards Rafael, he said:

"You have given me five hundred ducats to

capture this lady and to deliver her to you; I have taken the ducats and I have captured the lady. But as we always have the right to break off a bargain by returning back what we have received, I return you your gold and I gave this lady her liberty."

A big purse fell at the feet of the lieutenant.

"Begone!" continued the bandit, "if you now attempt anything against them, be careful not to do so on my domains, for if you do it, you will not get away with a whole skin."

Rafael kicked the bag from him with disdain.

"I never take back what I give; let your men divide this gold between them!"

"My men keep only what they have earned; don't you know that well?"

"By the manner in which you keep your promise, I can ignore it. As for this bag, I leave it to the hostess."

"Now, out of here!" exclaimed Giacomo whose energetic face was beginning to show signs of anger.

"Be it so! but here or elsewhere, in Naples or on your domains, I shall meet thy dependants, signor bandit."

"Take care also to meet my rifle, lieutenant of woe!"

Rafael retired slowly, after having cast an ominous look all around the hut.

"You are at liberty," said Giacomo to Madame de Noirmoutiers and Lucien.

Both took his hands ; the marchioness tried to make him accept for his troop, the equivalent of what his generous action had made him lose.

Giacomo stopped her in the middle of the offers she was stammering out.

"No," said he, "let us have the merit of generosity. Bandits as we are, we have our pride; but if ever any of my band are carried to Naples, remember the *osteria*."

It may be conceived that after such an adventure, a prolonged stay at the castle of Abruzzo was not very agreeable to Madame de Noirmoutiers. She often beheld in her dreams the livid head of Rafael Rasconti, and her terror was so great that she could no more venture her foot outside the castle ; every shepherd she saw upon the hills was transformed by her imagination into a bandit who was watching for her. She hastened her preparations of departure, conclude as speedily as possible the business of rent and of hire, and started back to Naples five or six days after the encounter at the *osteria*.

As she came down towards the flat country, leaving behind her the notched summits of the mountains, she recovered her careless gaiety, and already, after the first night's lodging, she began to forget her fears and to laugh at the terror which made her see some of Rafael's emissaries in every passer-by.

As the weather was fine and the air mild, they traveled short days, visiting curious sites, breakfasting in the ferms, ascending heights ; Madame de Noirmoutiers' singing, Horace Didier sketching, and the small caravan was returning to Naples one of the happiest in the world.

One morning, as they were following the road at the flank of a hill, the marchioness and Lucien got down from their horses and went before the others with the intention of visiting a chapel, the small steeples of which were towering above the hill, and from which the view should be very fine.

Horace was sketching an old shepherd who was sitting for one franc.

The baron and the baroness were sleeping in the caleche.

The chapel stood on the angle of a steep rock ; on the other side, the declivity decreased abruptly and the road wound through its sinuo-

sities into the woods. The solitude was deep.

Lucien and the marchioness were just about to pass over the steps on the chapel's side, when M. de Varny perceived, above the wall of dry stones of an enclosure, a hat raise up and the barrel of a rifle lengthening ; but before he could recognize the enemy who was menacing them, an explosion resounded, and the hat with the rifle disappeared behind the wall. Lucien turned his head to the side from which the noise of the detonation came ; a light cloud of whitish smoke floated above a hedge-row, behind the road, and from the centre of this row he saw Gaspard step out.

"This time," cried the dragoon, "it is really finished ; he will not torment you any more."

"Who is it?" asked Lucien.

"Come and see then, since you cannot guess."

Gaspard jumped on the road and lead Lucien behind the wall of the enclosure.

They found Rafael Rasconti lying on his back, in the costume of a shepherd and a weapon cocked by his side. The bullet of Gaspard had struck him in the forehead and instantly killed him.

"Oh !" said the dragoon, "I have not lost track of him since you left the castle. When

he attempted to make his stab, I made mine. Now we are clear. Liberty for liberty, life for life!"

Gaspard shook hands with Lucien, threw his rifle which he had loaded again upon his shoulder and disappeared in the distance.

That very night Madame de Noirmoutiers re-entered her Toledo street mansion.

Chapter VIII.

Madame de Noirmoutiers discovers how dear Lucien is to her.—"To wait and act."—Lucien's letter to the marchioness.—Visit to villa Orso.—Peppe's confession.—Lucien prepares to go.—Madame de Noirmoutiers at Lucien's house.—Why M. de Varny did not go.—Lucien's love for the marchioness.—His presentiments.—"Oh! wish not for such a love, it kills!"—M. de Noirmoutiers' illness.

For the first time in her life, the marchioness was in the presence of a *cicisbeo*, so much the more dangerous in that she felt that his cause had an advocate in her own heart. But if in the silence of her boudoir or reverie of solitude she was willing to allow how dear the secretary of the embassy was to her, she was irritated to see their names mixed in all the drawing-room gossip of the day, the report of their

adventure in the hostelry of the Abruzzo being spread throughout the town. Possessing the character she did, there was surely as much pride as chastity in this indignation, and all her conduct showed it plainly. She promised to herself, at first, to have a greater reserve in her connections with M. de Varny, and afterwards, to calmly keep him away, without showing any pity for his love; but it is nothing to make a good resolution,—the most important is to keep it.

As for Lucien, he came back to Naples

"*Le cœur tout debordant d'emotions divines,*" *

as the poet has written. This life *a deux*,—dual life,—agitated with so many perils, had intoxicated him. He found Charles Sheldon on better terms with LaToresilla, who gave him to see, in the manner in which she received him, all the anger which his forgetfulness had excited. But it was a matter about which Lucien cared little, and he paid as little heed to her threats as he did attention to the attempt she made to re-conquer a heart which had never belonged to her.

"What method have you then taken to subdue this rebel who, if I remember rightly, had repulsed your previous assaults?" asked Lucien of Charles Sheldon.

* Victor Hugo;—*Les Feuilles d'Automne*, XXIII.

"I have waited."

"Is that all?"

"How! all; but, my dear fellow, that is the most difficult thing in the world to do. Impatience ruins the best half of men; awkwardness misleads the rest. Strong men are patient, and you will learn one day that nothing can resist those who know how to wait."

"I always believed in those who knew how to act."

"Sometimes; but there is often much imprudence in action. I, in everything, belong to this new and intelligent class who believe that the occasion lost is to be found again. Life is only made up of defeat and revenge. See for instance LaToresilla."

"But you never reach triumph only by defeat!"

"No matter what way we take, provided we reach our journey's end! Here, my dear M. de Varny, you have twenty years of heart affection; you know that if I am smitten with Madame de Noirmoutiers, you also know how little am jealous and how little I try to please her. Well, then! wait again for six weeks or six months, and the day your love shall be crowned, I shall nearly gain my aim."

"Oh!" remarked M. de Varny with poorly disguised indignation.

"You believe me to be a veritable fop or you think that I blaspheme. I am neither impious, nor vain. I have honestly some experience."

Lucien who never left Mr. Sheldon without having a sore heart, hurried to Madame de Noirmoutiers' house that she might again put life and faith into him. But since their return from the Abruzzo, the hand of the marchioness no longer lingered in that of M. de Varny; her looks had no more that soft and limpid brightness that distils hope; her words were no longer embellished with a smile eloquent as a promise. Prudery had passed over the spring-blossom of love as the blast of winter.

Lucien, loved too sincerely to understand anything in this change, and in which a profligate would have read an avowal. He deeply despaired and yet longed for an explanation, but did not attempt to provoke it.

One day, however, when Madame de Noirmoutiers had received him more coldly than usual, he returned home in a state of grief that can only be understood by those who, having loved, find themselves suddenly isolated in their love. He thought that the time had come to

make an extreme resolution, and having set his business affairs in good order, he wrote to the marchioness the following letter:

NAPLES, *September 15th, 1847.*

"*Please to pardon me, madam, for presuming to occupy a few moments of your time by relating to you, that which perhaps has importance only in my own eyes. When you learn that it is the last time I shall, undoubtedly, annoy you with my troubles, you will, I feel confident, accord me the favor of reading this letter as you would grant to a peasant the honor of your partnership at a country dance.*

"*You have accustomed me to an intimacy that was dear to me, to a confidence that was precious to me. My love, timidly expressed, had obtained more than it had ever attempted to hope for, and I blessed you in my soul for all the joy that you gave me. You have withdrawn from me this friendship and confidence, madam; I must certainly have committed a fault for which you punish me, and I have no right to complain; but still must I ask you, to absolve me in your conscience, for I am ignorant of having committed a fault, and if I have done so, it is without my knowledge. I would wish, if I have acted*

wrongly, that it were in my power to remedy it, and I would do it at the cost of my life. You have not condescended to inform me of this fault, but I must submit and accept my condemnation, since such is your will. My heart is too full of your image to resolve to live near you, knowing that you are irritated; your coldness and your disdain bring down upon me too much suffering. I have resolved on the wisest decision,—the only practical one. This evening, my resignation shall be laid in the hands of my ambassador, and this night I shall leave Naples never to return.

"To say to you that in going I will feel my heart broken, is only what you may believe madam; but to add that this heart will faithfully bear your remembrance till the grave, will perhaps cause a smile to hover over your lips. However, I know that it is not a falsehood, as the future will fully prove to you. I go to Paris not to find rest and forgetfulness: I cherish my love too much to be willing to be cured of it; I go there because it is the city of the world where one can more easily lose himself in solitude. It is like an ocean the immensity of which conceals all who plunge in it.

"It was sweet for me to think that the rela-

tions that united us would never cease; for a long time this belief had comforted me, and I found in it a happiness that I cannot find language to express. This happiness has not had long duration; what earthly joy ever had? I would have bad grace to accuse you as the cause of it, and I throw back this bitterness upon the mysterious power that rules our hearts, and who would not have these affections prolonged, in order that we may not regret this poor world too much when the time comes for us to lay it aside.

"Farewell, madam, I will not any longer occupy you with one to whom you have given the name of friend, and who does not believe that he had paid too dearly for this title by leaving you in return all his life and all his love."

Lucien signed this letter and sent it to its address. When he heard the messenger go out with it, it seemed to him that his heart was going too: he fell into an arm-chair and began to weep like a child.

However, Madame de Noirmoutiers had, this very day, left Naples for the villa Orso which she had not seen for a long time. The report of the death of lieutenant Rafael had reached

there, and it was said that this inexplicable death should be the cause of a proceeding which would bring to light many concealed events. Peppe, who had, as we know, frequent dealings with the lieutenant, had his mind much agitated, when the marchioness unexpectedly arrived at the villa. This visit seemed to him a sure sign of the discovery of his complicity the consequences of which he dreaded ; full of fear, and knowing the goodness of his mistress, he determined to confess his faults, hoping that his frankness would be an argument in his favor.

Madame de Noirmoutiers was utterly astonished when she heard the account of the attempts that had been made against her, and which had miscarried only by the intervention of M. de Varny. Lucien had not even spoken to her on the subject, and his devotion, combined with such delicate discretion, touched her. Her heart was filled with secret reproaches, when on her return to Naples Lucien's letter was given to her ; she read it with great haste and then fell upon a sofa, her mind perplexed and overwhelmed with grief.

From what she knew of Lucien's character she did not doubt for a moment that he would carry his project into execution. She was af-

fected by the love of this young man who did not even reproach her hardness of heart, but who accused himself only of an alteration which destroyed a future whose promise was so brilliant. For the first time she felt her heart melt at the thought of this passion, deep and restrained, eager and devoted, chaste and loyal. She thought to herself that this love was worthy of being reciprocated and that it would be a pity to let Lucien go without a word of consolation, without a smile to restore him to life and hope. Thus it always happens with vivacious and unstable natures, Madame de Noirmoutiers was animating and exalting herself by following the rapid flight of her thoughts; and, acting on her first impulses, she made in a few moments more progress in this direction than she would have done had she tried to vanquish herself.

However she did not know what resolution to take; a thousand projects occurred to her irresolute mind, and alternately she was adopting and rejecting them. She would write, but the words her agitated hands traced on the paper did not clearly express her thoughts, they told too much or did not say enough; at last she finished a letter, but, when she had signed it, she discovered that this letter commenced

with reserve ended with passion; there was a reproach in the first line: in the last, there was an avowal. She tore it up excitedly and arose. She was astonished at seeing her own picture reflected in the mirror; she was flushed as if with fever and her eyes sparkled with a supernatural fire. No matter what she did, her thoughts unintentionally went back to Lucien's farewell letter, and when she had read it again, tears came to her eyes, rolled down her face, and she was amazed to think that she should sob over this piece of paper till she could no longer distinguish the writing through her tears.

In the meantime, Mr. Charles Sheldon entered. The marchioness had only time enough to wipe her cheeks and compose a smiling countenance, with the readiness which is a necessity in the life of a devotee of the *beau monde.* With that light carelessness which was usual to him, Mr. Sheldon spoke to Madame de Noirmoutiers about the hasty departure of Lucien of which he had just been informed.

"Do you believe it?" asked Theresa of him disguising her trouble.

"I am positive of it, madam," answered the tourist. "I found him in the midst of an unsettled apartment; and the orders are given for the post-chaise to be ready in two hours.

Madame de Noirmoutiers started up; her eyes on the dial; in two hours midnight would strike.

"I shall see him again in Paris," continued Charles, "but we will miss him at Naples this winter. He was an intelligent young man, although too sentimental sometimes."

This coldness of friendship greatly annoyed Madame de Noirmoutiers, whose passionate sentiments could not understand language so devoid of interest.

She quickly answered Mr. Sheldon, who, examining her more attentively, discovered on her face the traces still fresh of an emotion vainly suppressed. A moment later he rose up, and Madame de Noirmoutiers did not try to detain him.

It was then eleven o'clock. The insensibility of Charles had only irritated the exaltation of Theresa, as the wind fans an ardent flame; she half-opened the window; the night was dark; she heard the noise of Charles' steps becoming less and less distinct in the distance; then, yielding to the voice of her heart, carried away by an irresistible impulse, she flew down a flight of stairs leading from her private apartment into the street, and ran to Lucien's residence. She did

not know what she was going to tell him, but she was anxiously eager to see him at any cost. A servant yawningly opened the door; it was then near midnight. Passing like a flash in front of him, before he had time to question her, she had, without hesitating, penetrated into Lucien's room.

M. de Varny who had not undressed was sleeping; a lamp burning upon a table strewn with papers; he was pale; fatigue and care were plainly visible in his features; the whole room was in complete disorder, presenting nothing but trunks and portfolios; the bureau drawers and wardrobes were open and empty; lassitude had closed the eyes of the young man, whose sleep however was troubled. His lips were moving as if he tried to speak. Madame de Noirmoutiers, trembling with excitement, believed that she heard her name uttered by these lips that a sweet memory disclosed. She stepped forward, and her foot struck an implement.

"THERESA!" cried the young man with a voice that came from the heart. Madame de Noirmoutiers felt tears wet her eye-lids, and fell into his arms.

M. de Varny did not send in his resignation and forgot that he had contemplated a return to Paris.

As he crossed the town the following day, it appeared to him that Naples had some beauty that he had never before noticed, the sky some infinite glory, the sea some divine murmurings, the air some magical perfumes ; the feeling of his heart brightened and beautified everything and he saw creation through the prism of love. Gladly would he have wished that Naples had only one head to be able to kiss it wholly in one embrace.

So far he had loved Madame de Noirmoutiers, now he adored her. This the marchioness soon understood, and she recalled the day when Lucien had spoke to her of this love, which was inflamed at the remembrance. Her joy was extreme in feeling that he had not lied, and at first finding herself fascinated, transported by this passion, which resuming in itself all the intellectual strength of M. de Varny, she abandoned herself to him with all the ardor of youth and imagination.

This was for a space of fifteen days ; fifteen days of fever, of transport, of delirium.

But Madame de Noirmoutiers was too much loved ; at first she was intoxicated, but immediately afterwards she felt her heart vacillate. This

discovery, we must confess, grieved her; she asked herself with fright what the future reserved for her would be, if she felt so soon this disenchantment and coldness. She sincerely tried to cling again to Lucien, and imagination played so great a part in her organization, that she sometimes contrived to recover the enthusiasm of former days.

There is, in love seriously true, a kind of magnetic divination; Lucien felt this transformation before it had manifested itself, as the sailor anticipates the tempest by the ripples that ruffle the glittering surface of the waters. From that day, his happiness was poisoned; fear stole into his heart as the worm into the fruit; his joy became extinct, and a voice cried to him that henceforth he must dwell alone with his passion bound to his side as the robe of Dejanira.

He had reached that supreme height of love which judges and yet loves on. Nothing of what Madame de Noirmoutiers was, her desires, thoughts, hopes, weariness, was unknown to him; he read her heart as an open book, and yet nothing could extinguish or cool the passion which was surging in his blood. The illusion no longer amused him, the hope no longer lulled his sleep; he saw, he knew, he judged as a philosopher and he adored as a scholar.

Let no one cry out that this is paradoxical, exaggerated and impossible; we but relate what many have seen, what some have felt: the phenomenon exists, let those explain it who can.

Ere long a premature paleness spread over the face of Lucien, and, haunted by a fatal thought, he saw his days float by like a dark and silent stream whose leadened surface was sometimes lightened with a sinister glimmer.

One night, at the Austrian ambassador's residence, Charles Sheldon was much struck with the altered appearance of Lucien, and by closely observing Madame de Noirmoutiers and M. de Varny he soon understood the silent drama which was being enacted between them; he shrugged his shoulders and said to himself with a smile.

"Poor young man! that is the light-house which reveals the harbor to me!"

Then with the temerity of sceptical philosophy, he joined Lucien and said to him abrutply:

"You, my dear fellow, resemble PHYRHUS OF EPIRUS! another such victory, and you are lost!"

There are occasional hours when the most discreet of men, under the influence of a sadness in which a life-time seems compressed, overflow

as a vessel to full, and leave their secret open to penetration. Lucien, taken unawares, and completely broken down by this rude attack, energetically clasped the hand of Charles Sheldon.

"I do not need another victory," said he, "there are some battles in which we cannot engage twice."

"However she loves you!"

"She loves me! look at her eyes! on whom do they gaze? The multitude that admires her, or this mirror which reflects her image! See that smile! what causes it? The joy of her triumph, the intoxication to please! Where do you read the thought of love in that face gleaming with the pride of beauty? Where goes her desire? To the unknown passer-by, and who gives her the promise of another triumph! She loves me! But there is not a single flower in her hair, not a ribbon of her dress, not a pearl of her necklace, in fact any one thing that adorns her, that she does not prefer to me? Of little importance is my love to her; I belong to her, she knows that. Do you understand it: *I belong to her*, so that I am what she can break, annihilate at her fancy. Yet what am I? The past! that is an old story of which her ear is tired. But Orlando who is there, Max, you, Charles, you are the future with all

its mysteries! Oh! she loves me! Tell her then to sacrifice this ball, an evening party at San Carlo, least of all, the bouquet from which she strips the leaves, this scarf that caresses her shoulder, that the tempest of my heart may be appeased, and I stake my life against one *baiocci* that she will shake her fine head with disdain, and will distractedly devote herself to the dance. She loves me! Oh, do not wish for such a love, it kills!"

"It is possible, my dear fellow, coolly answered Charles, but avow also that it is a little of your own fault."

"What! has she not then all my thought, all my soul, my whole existence?"

"It is too much! too much! If you began by giving all to these charming daughters of Eve, what then do you expect they will have to wish after?"

"Are abnegation and devotedness then nothing? And does she not know, that from me she can have all, demand all, because there is in my heart an inexhaustible source of kindness and of mercy?"

"If she did not know it so well, it is likely that she would value it more. See, my dear fellow, you have acted as a prodigal, and prodi-

gals ruin themselves in love as well as in fortune."

"That is sufficient to make one a fool," said Lucien.

"Pshaw!" observed Mr. Sheldon, "it is a lesson!" He turned upon his heel, and two minutes afterwards he was close by the marchioness.

But if Lucien was often depressed by the irritation of his sufferings, he had also sometimes the intoxicating exaltation of love. Then he would fling thought to the winds. He would forget all and abandon himself to the voluptuousness of the day without regretting the eve, nor with fear for the morrow. Madame de Noirmoutiers, obedient to her nature, made him pass abruptly from the freezing chills of disdain to the tropical ardor of passion.

"As shifting as the waves" said he to her sometimes, parodying the words of SHAKESPERF.

In the meanwhile, Madame de Noirmoutiers received a letter which informed her that her husband, on returning from the mission which had taken him to Vienna, had fallen sick at Rome. Unable to continue his journey, he requested the marchioness to attend him.

Chapter IX.

The marchioness' absence.—Arrival at Naples of M. de Noirmoutiers, M. and Madame d'Astouans.—The beginning of a mysterious drama.—Madame de Noirmoutiers and Madame d'Astouans.—Sequel to the mysterious drama.—The pistols.—The end of the dim drama.—Death of the marquis de Noirmoutiers.—Joy and grief.—Lucien's absence from Naples.—Charles' perfidy.—Lucien's return.—The villa Orso again.

Madame de Noirmoutiers did not lose a minute in making preparation for her departure. If the tenderness, in some respects filial, which she had ever expressed towards her husband entered in any way into her precipitation, there was certainly also a very lively and secret wish to escape from this love which was still agitating her, but did not charm any more. Lucien, informed of her intended departure by a note, hastened, and saw her leave the same night.

During the few days that she remained far away from Lucien, he lived in Naples as in a desert. His heart was in Rome.

The arrival of M. and Madame d'Astouans brought only fresh distraction to his mind, by obliging him to do the honors of the town to both travelers.

However M. de Noirmoutiers, who had retained all the faculties and activity of his mind in the midst of his sufferings, had obtained from

his wife the promise that she would bring him back to Naples as soon as his state of health would permit him to support the motion of the vehicle. As a faithful servant of royalty, he wished himself to render an account of the results of a mission the full particulars of which could not very well be detailed in a correspondence.

One of the first persons whom he saw on his arrival was M. de Varny. The old man, who had a very clear recollection of physiognomies, at the first glance recognized him as one of *The Arms of England's* inn guests. He mentioned the fact to Lucien, whom this remembrance disturbed and whose emotion was deep when he observed the cool look of the marquis passing slowly from him to Madame de Noirmoutiers, whilst a bitter smile wrinkled his discolored and withered cheeks.

As he was no longer dazzled by the passion which blinds the most acute minds, and as in his quality of diplomatist he had made for himself an easy science of observation, the marquis knew how to sieze in passing the most fugitive sign that betrayed the impulses of the soul; nothing slipped from his mute analysis. So, when M. de Varny was about leaving the mar-

quis, the keen look of the patient was directed to him with so powerful an expression, that Lucien lowered his eyes, and felt a cold perspiration wet the roots of his hair.

A mysterious drama was very soon being enacted between these three personages; the passioned but silent scenes, played in the mansion de Noirmoutiers, and the state of the marquis' health, drew a fearful character from the old antiquary, whose life was expiring without clouding his intelligence. The presence of Madame d'Astouans in Naples had galvanized into the unsteady soul of Madame de Noirmoutiers love inspired by jealousy. Pride was still the principle of this jealousy; but no matter what was the cause, if to Lucien the effect was the same. It was not here, as in the case of LaToresilla, a side-scene princess, who, in all her brightness, still remained a courtesan; it was a young lady of an excellent wit and from the best society; Greuze would have desired her sweet and smiling countenance for his pencil, and her candid graces had an empire which held their own with the most refined coquetry. Madame de Noirmoutiers saw then in her a most redoubtable rival, the first aspiring to trouble the superb quietness of her heart, a rival so much more dan-

gerous because of her relationship with M. de Varny, and her open and avowed friendship for him, rendering their connections intimate and constant.

The first result of this alarm of jealousy was violent; it brought up before all the assiduous presence of Lucien in the mansion, the presence from which his delicate soul suffered, but the consequences of which he submitted to, because it drew to him at the same time the intoxication for a love that the feeling of rivalry had frightened into a revival.

The old man, condemned by medical science, was too well learned to receive him with bad grace; what he felt he could not help; he was a man of court and experience, who had accepted marriage as a wager, and who, having lost, resigned himself genteely to pay the stakes like a gentleman. He only revenged himself by an exquisite urbanity which sometimes gave forth smiles and glances, whose keen eloquence Lucien well understood. Madame de Noirmoutiers saw this, and it frequently happened that, under the influence of a reaction as lively as it was sudden, she displayed to Lucien a face steeped in tears. Then, kneeling close by the old diplomatist, she would break out in sobs and cover his hands with

supplicating kisses. M. de Noirmoutiers, with a cruel simplicity, pretended to misunderstand the cause of this exalted sensibility; and passing his trembling fingers on the inclined head of his wife would say to her with a smile:

"Be calm, madam, I am not so sick as you think, and my health, soon recovered, will allow me to thank you for all the kindness you have shown to me. Then turning towards M. de Varny, he would add:

"Take for yourself also, my dear sir, a good part of this hope."

At this spectacle and these words, Lucien would feel his heart ready to break, and would go and conceal his agitation in an obscure corner of the drawing-room.

One day when Madame de Noirmoutiers was out, he found himself alone with the marquis. The sickness had made dreadful progress. The antiquary was sitting in a large arm-chair, and his head reposing on its large overturned back, the dark velvet of which set out the emaciated lines and livid tints of his figure, shining and wrinkled as a sheet of yellow parchment.

A faint light streamed through the long red curtains that hung to the window, producing a purple reflection on all that came within its

scope, lessening, according as it went away from its luminous edges, until it became extinct upon the wide shelves of an oakwood library case whose black and heavy frames rose to the ceiling. A bright fire was crackling on the hearth, and the flames, spreading, lighted with ardent tints upon the old arms, Grecian and Roman panoplies, dark suits of armour placed on pedestals of marble or suspended from the walls; upon the antique consoles, Grecian urns, Etruscan vases, cups snatched from Pompeii, brass lamps, the alabaster amphoræ, the divinities of the pagan Olympia, all those relics of stone or metals of a world destroyed, were reflecting the light which breaking at their sides, and radiated into the deepness of the room, where two pale statues, master-pieces of an unknown PHIDIAS, stood in their pure and sublime nudity, appearing like two marble sentinels watching at the threshold of this museum of the past.

A suite of heavy hangings drowned the noise from the outside; the monotonous stroke of a pendulum, the sparkling of the fire alone disturbing the silence. It was also occasionally broken by the labored respiration of the old man.

His glances moved from his books to his medals, his two passions; then he fixed them upon

Lucien who sat by the window, between the curtains. According as his moments were running out, the furtive looks of the diplomatist were directed with a more constant gaze upon M. de Varny ; a strange brightness lit his eyeballs, which were as wide and motionless as the eyes of those nightbirds that shine in the darkness. The shadow of a thought was playing upon this forehead, despoiled, yellow and polished as the skull of an old ivory saint, and the wrinkled corners of his mouth were rising up with a bitter expression of irony. The heart of Lucien was beating at lightning pace. The look of the antiquary was weighing like so much lead upon his head.

The dying man slowly raised his arm, and made a sign with his fingers for Lucien to approach.

As if he had obeyed the pressure of a spring, Lucien instantly left his place.

The old man turned his face towards the chimney, and, pointing out to him a carved box of burnished steel which occupied a corner of the casing, said :

"I beg of you to please give me that box," said he with a clear voice.

Lucien handed him the box without answering.

The old man set it on his knees, took the key of it, opened the lock, and turned the cover upon its hinges.

There was only a pair of small pistols inside the box; they were richly inlaid with damask and precious work.

"It is Madame de Noirmoutiers who has given them to me," said the old man with the same clear voice, passing his lean fingers along the barrels of the weapons.

He drew one up from its receptacle and played with its pliant and strong spring.

"She gave them to me at the time of our marriage," continued he, "to deliver me from an enemy in case of an attack: it was then an unavailing precaution, because there are to-day no more enemies; friends have replaced them."

The old man concentrated his shining looks upon M. de Varny, and his lips uttered a low laugh, acute as the noise of a file upon a saw.

"They are loaded," added he cocking them once more. "There is here in this tube so well ornamented, a bullet ready to kill the strongest young man, the most handsome cavalier of Naples."

And still laughing with his sardonic laugh,

he turned the weapon towards Lucien's forehead who was standing motionless and mute in his presence, following all his motions, hearing all his words with a shudder.

Suddenly the old man, by a supreme effort, rose up. Lucien saw the black tube of the pistol two feet from his forehead.

"If I was to kill you, M. de Varny, would it not be my right?" said the old man in a low voice.

"It would be your right," said the secretary of embassy, more pale than the statues of Paros, but as unshaken as they.

M. de Noirmoutiers maintained a terrible silence for an instant, the pistol at the level of Lucien's forehead who was standing inclined but steady before him. A sinister thought seemed to pass like a flash over his livid face, then he lowered his arms and fell again upon his arm-chair with a burst of mocking laughter.

Lucien raised his head.

"It would be a melodrama, sir," said the marquis, "and for a gentleman it would be very bad taste. I do not love enough to hate, and I leave to Madame de Noirmoutiers the task to avenge me."

Lucien shuddered; the words of the marquis penetrated into his heart like the cold blade of a knife.

He was still standing up when a curtain was opened, and Madame de Noirmoutiers' head appeared through the fold of velvet. She stopped for an instant, astonished at the glance Lucien threw toward her.

But the marquis, with the tact of a man used to all emergencies, saluted her graciously with a gesture.

"Come to me, my dear friend," said he, "I was willing to leave M. de Varny a souvenir of my gratitude, and I have chosen this box. It will be doubly precious to him because, having belonged to me, it originally came from you."

Lucien took the articles from the hands of the implacable old man. When he left the hotel, it seemed to him that in place of a heart he had a devouring fire in his breast.

A few days afterwards the marquis de Noirmoutiers died.

Madame d'Astouans prolonged her stay in Naples, the pure air of the place strengthening her health which had become impaired by the climate of Paris. Madame de Noirmoutiers, who met her leaning on Lucien's arm, and who knew that he acted as cavalier to her in her excur-

sions, attributed his presence at her house to a cause which M. de Varny was vainly striving against.

"If you do not love her," she said to him, "you should have already given up an intimacy which offends me."

"Do you wish then, that in order to please your fancy, I should be guilty of an ingratitude which would cut me to the heart? Are you ignorant of what her father, M. de Villaines, has done for me?"

"I have nothing to say, if you give to a sentiment proceeding from the heart the name of fancy."

"It is really you who speak? Let me give this name to all that survives between us!" exclaimed Lucien with a desolate smile. "If I was still at the aurora of my illusion, I could call the feeling that inspires your words jealousy; is not jealousy the sign of love? But can you really dare to say that you love me to-day, Theresa?"

Madame de Noirmoutiers, who was looking at the sparks flying in the smoke of the fireside, rumpled her black dress, shook the carpet from her impatient foot, then, carried away by a cruel frankness of which she could not control the outburst, suddenly exclaimed:

"What I know, my God! I love you and I forget you, according to the days! Are we really masters of our own hearts? You are dear to me and yet you are not alive here, in this soul, those infinite desires and aspirations without name besiege. I love you, and yet other images are floating in my memory; I do not love you, and nevertheless I am jealous and I dread the thought that your love can forsake me."

Lucien, at those words, turned pale.

"Pride! pride!" murmured he in a dull voice.

Then Madame de Noirmoutiers precipitated herself on his neck, clasped him in her arms, and a kiss carried away the sufferings of Lucien as a zephyr does the dead leaves.

Then, the following day, a similar scene would be repeated.

Whilst these things were occurring, M. Sheldon was working patiently to sap the empire of Lucien, already so nearly shaken. As a smart man and a cool calculator, he fully understood that this weary tormenting passion would only require a safe pretext to die. This pretext he tried to find in that which mostly preoccupied Ma-

dame de Noirmoutiers' mind, the connection of M. de Varny with Madame d'Astouans.

With indomitable patience, he was watching for an occasion when the vanity of Madame de Noirmoutiers might be aroused. The unglutted anger of LaToresilla served him marvellously in this affair. Very dexterously he presented to her a possibility of revenging herself upon the forgetfulness of her lover by snatching Madame de Noirmoutiers from him, and one night while searching her desk, to whet his mischievous desires, he laid his hand on a note from the text of which the meaning he wished to attach to it could be drawn. It was from Lucien, addressed to LaToresilla. She allowed him to take it, and Charles had no more doubt of the victory.

Lucien, charged with a special mission for the king of Naples who was at Palerma, had just left on the order of his ambassador. One day when Madame d'Astouans was at the marchioness' house, Charles presented himself there. With the craft of a comedy super, he took advantage of the moment when the Parisian lady was rising to let fall on the carpet a letter that would appear to have been dropped from her handkerchief. In returning to her place, Madame de Noirmoutiers saw the letter at the foot

of the arm-chair that Madame d'Astouans had occupied, and almost immediately Mr. Sheldon made an excuse to retire.

The letter was in an unsealed envelope inscribed with the name of Madame d'Astouans, written by Charles Sheldon after having, nearly a whole night, sat copying Lucien's handwriting, letter by letter. A close examination would have discovered the fraud, but at first sight the writing was calculated to deceive. Mr. Sheldon knew that the billet would be read, and so it was. It contained only a few lines freely written, in which Lucien informed LaToresilla of his departure from Naples, and announced to her an absence of some days. He had composed them at the time of his excursion to the castle of the marchioness, in the Abruzzo.

Madame de Noirmoutiers saw in it the material, indisputable proof, of his guilty connection with Madame d'Astouans. Had Lucien not started the eve before for Palerma?

She did not take the trouble to reflect on the style of the billet, and her injured vanity brought up the consequences that Mr. Sheldon expected from it.

Lucien stopped longer than he had anticipated in Palerma. They were then at the culminat-

ing point of the famous business of the salphurs, and the notes were flying about from the embassies to the Neapolitan cabinet. M. de Varny, who could not withdraw his thoughts from Toledo street, was striving in the midst of the confounded entanglements of the conferences and of protocols, to conclude his labors and return; but it did not depend upon him to make things go quicker. Diplomacy is not accustomed to expedite matters. However the first secretary of the French legation having started for Sicily with some new instructions, Lucien was called back to Naples.

The night was advanced when he arrived there. As he started by the boat charged with correspondence, he could not instruct Madame de Noirmoutiers of his return.

His first care, was to hasten to the Toledo street mansion. The marchioness had started for the villa Orso. Lucien jumped on a horse and rushed at full speed to see her.

At the first avowal of their love, Madame de Noirmoutiers had given to Lucien a key of the green door which connected the exterior gardens beneath the villa's portico.

"It is there you have exposed your life to save me," she had said to him, "let this key reward you."

Lucien left his horse at the osteria, and he made but one step to reach the door. The moon was shining sweetly on the country, the soft perfumes of the waters and of the hills were floating in the air. Lucien saw the door between the genets and the tamarinds; panting, he slipped into the garden, but exhausted with emotion, his forehead burning, he rested on a bench, and supported his head, in which a thousand contrary thoughts were eddying, upon the marble feet of a white divinity; the beatings of his heart swelled his breast, when in the midst of the silence the faint sound of a key turning in a lock caused him to start up.

Chapter X.

A lover's anguish.—Lucien and Charles.—"To-morrow, we will fight!"—Every medal has two faces.—On the spot.—The death of Charles Sheldon.—The bloody handkerchief.—Lucien at Madame de Noirmoutiers'.—Lucien's farewell to the marchioness.—A year after.—Lucien turns up again on the *Boulevard des Italiens*.—An uncle's deception —"Who the devil invented women?"—The meeting at the ball.—"To-morrow! To-morrow!"—The last disenchantment.—Madame de Noirmoutiers and her uncle, M. de Jaure.—The new aspirant.—"Lucien?" said she.—"He is dead! madam."

UCIEN listened; the door turned stealthily upon its hinges, and some distinct steps resounded on the gravel. Between the orange trees a swift shadow passed; it came nearer; Lucien shuddered; distracted, dazed, he pressed his hands upon his heart to still its terrible beatings; he stooped, looked, and Charles Sheldon rapidly presented himself to his eyes, smiling and triumphant.

A deep thrill passed through Lucien's body; a mist came before his eyes; his face exuded a cold perspiration; he reeled, as Charles was about to disappear under the balcony. The blind half-opened, but suddenly M. de Varny sprang forward and laid his hand on the arm of Charles Sheldon.

Charles stepped back and drew his dagger

the steel of which glistened between them ; but having recognized Lucien his arm fell.

"M. de Varny !" said he. "What the devil prevented you speaking ? I came near killing you."

Lucien was livid ; his hand pressed Charles arm. Anger, despair, hate, stifled his voice.

Charles, with the exquisite grace of a gentleman, pointed out to him the blind that was moving.

"I believe you have something to tell me, M. de Varny," said Charles ; "I await your orders, but let us talk in the shade and very low."

They went behind a cluster of pomegranete-trees.

"I listen to you," said Charles.

"You know where that pathway leads to, Mr. Sheldon ; you know who is waiting at this balcony ?" said at last M. de Varny with a voice which passed through his lips as the rattle in the throat of a dying man. "It is you who are expected there ?"

"Discretion is a virtue ; but I shall not make any mystery with you of a thing that you have guessed."

"She loves you ?"

"I do not know anything of it ; but appear-

ances would permit me to believe it, if, in such an affair, wisdom did not command us to always doubt."

"She loves you!" continued Lucien distractedly. "She! Theresa!"

"Oh! do not take it so hard, my dear fellow, you do not then remember what I told you about this subject?—I have waited."

Lucien endured a terrible torture; his knees were trembling; while his impassive companion looked on smiling.

"I was proposing to myself to inform you on your return," muttered he, "but, you arrive like a comet, in the very midst of events! It is an unpardonable imprudence."

Lucien passed his hand over his forehead; his will made a powerful effort to escape from the delirious thoughts buzzing in his brain, and then in a serious and calm voice, he replied:

"To-morrow sir, my friends will be at your house."

"Are you joking, my dear fellow?"

"To-morrow, we will fight! and one of us must fall."

Charles remained silent; he looked at Lucien for a short time in the moonlight; his face was as a mask of alabaster. He shrugged his shoul-

ders, mumbled a few words between his teeth, then smiled:

"If you are so much resolved on it, my dear M. de Varny, we will slaughter each other. But, upon my soul, I did not believe in this age we could be induced to act so foolishly."

"I have your word?"

"I give it to you."

"By to-morrow, then!"

"By to-morrow, let it be!"

The two young men saluted each other. Charles coquettishly took the road to the villa, Lucien directed his steps to the green door.

"By my word of honor, he is a fool!" said Charles. "And I who believed him to be a man of wit!"

Lucien staggered like one whose senses had forsaken him. He walked at hazard into the country, wandering here and there, distracted, panting, anguish in his heart, fever in his blood; then he fell, exhausted on the sand. When he opened his eyes, the shining sun was gleaming on the sea which was caressing his feet with its foamy edge.

The recollection of the night, invaded his soul. He rose up, dipped his drowsy head in the fresh waves, threw a last look at the villa which had

often afforded him so much happiness, and rushed on the road to Naples.

Charles Sheldon was waiting. When he saw Horace Didier enter, he took him lightly by the hand.

"The night then has not counseled wisdom?" said he.

"It appears that you know what message I bear?" replied the painter astonished.

"Of a duel, I imagine."

"You save me the expense of a protocol. You see in me the second of our friend Lucien, who is extremely desirious of getting rid of you."

"I am ready for his orders."

"So, you accept?"

"I am too much his friend to refuse him so light a pleasure."

"It is a strange affair! M. de Varny was as white as a sheet when he entered my house this morning, I took him for his ghost; from the manner in which he spoke to me, I understood that there was no explanation to ask, and I have come."

"Killed or not, this man will not go far. There are some people very eager to mislead their minds into tragedy, when it will be so easy for them to take life as a song!"

While speaking, Mr. Sheldon was completing his toilet.

"So," continued he on going out, "you have no knowledge of the cause of this duel?"

"None, whatever," replied the artist.

"Well, then! my dear fellow, it means that every medal has two faces."

"Oh! there is a medal?"

"An adorable blonde medal that is called Madame de Noirmoutiers."

On their way they overtook Max de Rheiss, and the three went into the country. On the sea-shore, between two promontories, in a solitary nook, they found Lucien.

M. de Varny saluted Mr. Sheldon.

"I have chosen pistols;" said he, "I hope that these arms will suit you."

Charles nodded affirmatively.

"These gentlemen will load the pistols and will settle the conditions of the fight; I care but little for them provided it must be well understood that it will be a duel unto death," said Lucien.

"Are you very particular about it?" replied Charles without appearing to be affected.

"Is it really you who ask me that?"

"Faith! my dear M. de Varny, I would have

you observe that if I had been obliged to fight after all the treachery to which I have submitted, I should not have the pleasure of serving your aim to-day."

When the weapons were ready, Horace and Max placed the rivals at twenty paces from each other, with permission to advance within ten paces, and give the signal.

Lucien and Charles advanced a few steps, and then their pistols went off so closely together, that they were heard only as one report. Charles turned on one leg and fell down on his back. Lucien dashed towards him.

But Max de Rheiss had already raised Charles in his arms; with a trembling hand he half-opened his clothes; the bullet was lodged full in his chest, close by the heart; some bubbles of air were dropping from the gaping wound; a red foam purpled the lips of the dying man. Max de Rheiss shook his head; by these symptoms he understood that the lungs were gored.

Mr. Sheldon sought the hand of M. de Varny and pressed it.

"You have done a foolish act," said he speaking with difficulty; "I pardon you willingly; but between ourselves I will tell you that a woman, and the most beautiful of all, does not de-

serve that a brave young man should expose his life for her. After all, my death will be one aureola more to the forehead of Madame de Noirmoutiers; so do not repent you too much for what you have done."

Blood gushed out from his mouth and crimsoned the hands of M. de Varny.

"My throat burns!" hoarsely cried Mr. Sheldon in whose throat the death rattles were distinctly heard. "Here," added he, taking an handkerchief bearing the motto of the marchioness, pierced by the bullet and reddened with his blood; "take her back this souvenir, and tell her that, like a knight, I died bearing her colors."

Charles again smiled, let his head fall back heavily, and expired.

An hour afterwards, Lucien entered Madame de Noirmoutiers' house.

She had come back to Naples, perplexed by a vague anxiety which a few words let slip by Mr. Sheldon had caused her to feel.

When she saw M. de Varny appear on the threshold of her room, she turned pale frightened by his pallor and by the gloomy glance he threw at her.

She remained half-reclining on an arm-chair,

without strength to rise, without voice to interrogate him. Seized with a deep terror which froze her blood, the only manifestations of life she gave was by the palpitating of her bosom.

Lucien, mute, came nearer slowly.

According as he advanced, the eyes of Madame de Noirmoutiers dilated, her shiveled hands bent upon the arms of the chair.

Lucien stopped a short time in front of her, then let fall on her knees the bloody handkerchief.

Madame de Noirmoutiers trembled in every limb and then rose, uttering a cry of terror.

"Charles ! ! !" she shrieked.

"I HAVE KILLED HIM !" said Lucien.

Madame de Noirmoutiers fell down again upon the arm-chair, livid and senseless. A convulsive trembling agitated her body, her bright eyes were without tears.

Lucien sat down in front of her. He was revenged, and yet perhaps he was suffering even more than she. Despair was torturing his heart. Never had he loved her so much.

When Madame de Noirmoutiers recovered from her state of torpor, Lucien was still standing steadily before her ; she lowered her eyes and her looks again met the bloody handkerchief lying at her feet.

A sob arose from her breast and tears flowed abundantly from her eyes.

At this spectacle, by a reaction which had its source in jealousy, Lucien felt all his anger again enkindled.

"You loved him then very much?"

"Oh!" said she wringing her hands with a gesture full of anguish, and carried away by the strange frankness which, in this unsteady character, was the only thing that ever remained complete, "I do not know myself! Who will tell me what I am? My heart oscillates, hurried away towards everything! If I was to tell you all, my God! you would scorn me perhaps. Here," added she, her lips curling with a bitter disdain, "I am arrived at the point that I even doubt my own feelings! Do I love? do I not love? Do I know this?"

"Poor heart!" said Lucien. "If that is so I do not hate you any more; I pity you!"

At this word the pride of the marchioness was shocked; she tossed her head proudly, and cried in an indignant tone:

"Pity me! Oh! I much prefer to endure suffering than pity!"

"If you don't want pity, what do you want then?" said Lucien to her, at the same time

pointing with his finger to the red handkerchief that she was trampling under her foot.

Madame de Noirmoutiers drew back with a cry; and again the tears began to flow.

M. de Varny arose; a supreme emotion could be read in his contracted features. He moved towards the marchioness, took her hand, and placed his lips to her pale forehead.

He felt a trembling in all his being, and his arms opened as if he was about to take and press Madame de Noirmoutiers to a heart which still belonged wholly to her; but, subduing his love, he went quickly backwards.

"Farewell!" said he, and he walked towards the door.

As he was passing the threshold, Madame de Noirmoutiers sat up.

"Lucien!" murmured she as with a dying voice. Though her voice was faint, Lucien heard it.

He returned. She was standing up, supporting herself against the marble mantle-piece. The mirror reflected her face; in her grief, with her wet eyes and the fine hair plaited in wreaths on a white forehead pure and clear as the alabaster, she was as beautiful as Niobe. But she had undoubtedly remarked it, because she was car-

essing her picture with the look and her slender hand was playing with the ribbons at her waist.

"Farewell!" said Lucien again, and he disappeared.

An hour afterwards, his resignation had reached the embassy, and the same night he started for Paris.

One year later, M. de Varny could still be met on the *Boulevard des Italiens*, going and coming between the frontier of his empire of three hundred steps. As formerly, the *far niente* had reconquered him, and as formerly he was living *au jour le jour* with the *Boheme* of Paris. M. de Villaines, whom the resignation of his nephew had at first extremely angered, appeased himself little by little and continued to establish the equilibrium constantly compromised in his annual budget. He sometimes chided him but waited, believing in the future to

renew the diplomatic chain so violently broken. Madame d' Astouans, to whom Lucien had avowed all, displayed a greater and more sweet affection for a cousin who knew how to love so profoundly. Perhaps it would not have been necessary to Lucien to make a strong effort to give a more tender character to this affection, but he did not even think of it, and Madame d' Astouans, although in the bottom of her heart a little nettled at his constant faithfulness to a remembrance, made herself his patroness to her father and his advocate in the world.

Some reports of his adventures at Naples had penetrated into the Parisian drawing-rooms. They had been much spoken of, and as they had been embellished, as is the custom with marvellous accounts, Lucien found himself without his knowledge surrounded by a romantic and mysterious glory which made him welcome in all the houses where M. de Villaines compelled him to go. It would have been easy for him to play the part of a LARA or a ROHAN ; but, to tell the truth, he cared but little about it, having never had any ambition in his life.

In short, his existence was in all respects similar to that which he had led before his de-

parture for Naples. A more continual and serious sadness could only be noticed in him, a sort of calm and pensive dejection, which made those who had his confidence say that the spring of his life was broken.

One day while walking with Horace Didier, who, since the death of Mr. Sheldon, had formed an intimate friendship with him, Lucien suddenly pressed his arm.

"What is it?" asked the painter.

Lucien did not answer; Horace, seeing him dreadfully pale, looked around.

At this moment a woman was crossing the roadway; and though Horace could only see her back, yet with the glance of an artist he did not mistake the harmony of the lines and the grace of her form,—he recognized Madame de Noirmoutiers.

"Let us see!" said he to Lucien: "do not go and do anything foolish, now."

"As you please," said Lucien, who scarcely understood him.

"Who the devil invented women!" exclaimed the furious artist in parting with his friend, whom he left lost and dazed as a man who had put his hand on a torpedo.

That night there was a ball in a house in the *Faubourg St. Honore* at which Lucien had given his word to be present. He went there with Madame d'Astouans. As he entered the drawing-room, he saw, dancing in the midst of a quadrille, Madame de Noirmoutiers.

They exchanged a glance, and Lucien felt his heart sink within him.

He hastened to conceal himself in a small room where, with his eyes closed and his head in his hands, he sat contemplating the radiant picture which was floating into his memory as a luminous vision in a dark room.

Whilst thus alone, lost in his thoughts, he felt a light hand sweetly touch his shoulder. He raised his head.

Madame de Noirmoutiers was before him.

"LUCIEN!" said she to him with her divine voice.

"THERESA!" murmured he, looking at her with a happiness mixed with terror.

There was so much of fascination in her eyes, that the indignation, the hate, the anger fled away from the heart of Lucien like mists before the rising sun.

"Do you love me?" asked the marchioness.

"Oh! for God's sake don't ask me that!"

said he; and taking his enchantress' head in his arms, he seemed to concentrate all his love in one long, fond kiss.

Who could describe what passed between them? But as some intruders were interfering with their happiness, she escaped leaving him with a heart full of a divine promise.

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" said he to himself running on the boulevards, intoxicated, insane. The past and the present were as nothing before this word.

The following day he waited. Hours succeeded hours. His heart was throbbing with impatience. Theresa did not come. Towards evening he went out; as he was going to her house, he saw pass on the *Place de la Concorde*, a caleche, close by which was prancing a fine horse, mounted by a young man whose toilet was of an irreproachable cut and fashion. Lucien stopped horrified; Madame de Noirmoutiers was leaning against the coach-door and smiled at the young man.

Here is what had passed.—At the time that Madame de Noirmoutiers was Mademoiselle de Miriolles, she had for uncle a certain commander of Malta, who had put all his wealth

into an annuity to enable him to live comfortably. Selfish and unfeeling, she found him in Paris, as she had left him. He was a man of easy habits, of exquisite manners, going much into society, where he passed for an excellent Epicurian. M. de Jaure had instituted himself the protector of his neice and took a sincere pleasure in leading about a pretty woman, whom all the young men could not allow to pass without turning round to gaze on her.

About noon tide, whilst Lucien was waiting for her, Theresa saw entering her house, M. de Jaure, who had forced all the doors.

"I find you in a wrapper," said he, "so much the better, an undress suits best to speak about marriage.

"I have not time to hear you," answered she a little provoked at seeing him establish himself in an arm-chair; "let us delay serious business till to-morrow."

"I should think like you, if hymen was a grave matter; but, indeed, notwithstanding my good will, the world has forced me to consider it as a funny necessity of our social order. It is a business that we must talk of laughingly. Then, we shall speak of it, if you please."

"But, uncle, I have no inclination to marry again! I swear it to you."

"You are mistaken!" retorted he. "A pretty woman will be too lonely, if she has not some one to tease. For a widow, there is no prohibited fruit, and if you suppress the apple, you suppress the pleasure."

Madame de Noirmoutiers tried in vain to defend herself by fretting and pouting; she had however, to hear M. de Jaure to the end. He was an agreeable talker. He conducted himself so well, mixing jesting with business, that Theresa, notwithstanding her impatience, could not forbear a laugh.

When she had laughed, she was half-conquered.

"It is a gift that I make you," continued the commander taking a pinch of snuff, with the grace of a gentleman of the ancient regime. "My friend is a young, handsome man, rich and of a noble family. Between us, he is not very intelligent, but that constitutes a precious quality. He is auditor at the counsel of State, which enables him to go to the Tuileries and to the ministers' houses. His wife will touch the *Chaussee d' Antin*, the *bon ton*, by the dress, at the *Faubourg Saint-Germain* by the name. Marry him,

and you will be forever indebted to me. I have a great inclination to possess a small nephew to bequeath him my experience and advices in default of the wealth I no longer have."

M. de Jaure, having finished his speech, settled himself as if he had a right to introduce the pretender.

If the reader finds that, for a selfish man, he was interfering much with the business of others, his surprise will not be so great on learning that the auditor was his God-son, and that, to divert himself, the commander had resolved to help him to make a fortune without it costing him anything.

The auditor brought an admission ticket for a ball for the benefit of the pensioners of the old civil list. It was accepted, and the conversation turned on the new fashions and the anecdotes of the day. In these matters, M. le count de Bergot gave proof of great erudition. He talked much, and he sprinkled his conversation with the golden sand of flattery; he excelled so well in turning a compliment, that Madame de Noirmoutiers was dazzled with him. It was a brilliant succession of eulogistic epithets. The

hours flew on, and Theresa started for the *Bois de Boulogne*, singing like a linnet. Perhaps she intended to postpone the execution of her promise to the following day ! Perhaps also she forgot it !

Lucien returned to his home. He no longer felt himself suffering ; he had in his ears a noise as when we plunge the head into water.

He hastily wrote a few words ; he smiled in giving them to his servant, and the honest man, supposing that it was a question of good fortune, thought in himself what very happy people masters were.

Carried away by her uncle, Madame de Noirmoutiers dined in town. When she re-entered to make her toilet, she was so hurried that she postponed till the next day the reading of her correspondence.

The following day, at noon, she took a fancy to open her letters ; she read the note of Lucien : she hastily threw a shawl over her shoulders, and alone, on foot, dashed into the

streets of Paris, running directly towards the residence of M. de Varny.

Just as she was stepping over the threshold, some one seized her by the arm and stopped her. It was Horace Didier.

"LUCIEN?" queried the marchioness.

"HE IS DEAD! madam." —

EPILOGUE.

EPILOGUE.

What became of the marchioness?—Grief;—illness;—convalescence;—-resignation;—-consolation;—-forgetfulness and—marriage of Madame de Noirmoutiers.—The latest concerts and the first lilacs.

If there are now any of our readers curious to know what became of the marchioness, it will be easy for us to tell them in a few words.

It would be impossible to express the *grief* into which the death of Lucien plunged Madame de Noirmoutiers.

Horace brought her back to her house in a *fainting* condition.

They put her in bed in a *hysterical state*, and

for *twenty-four hours* she lay convulsed in *tears and sobs.*

As soon as she could raise herself, she energetically declared that she would put *on mourning,*—and she did it effectively.

A good friend reprimanded her on this prank; but as black made her look ravishing, Madame de Noirmoutiers held out, and wore it—*three or four days*—incognito.

After a fortnight, by *violent pressing*, they succeeded in conducting her—*to the concert.*

At the end of *three weeks*, she was kind enough to agree to make a little toilet to go—*to the opera* ;

And the *month* was not completely past before she was dancing at—*a ball.*

It is true that the ball was given at the Austrian embassy, and that it was only an—*after breakfast dance.*

M. le count de Bergot made himself very assiduous in his attentions to Madame de Noirmoutiers at—*the Carnival time ;*

Which fact some persons commented on—*during Lent*

They loved each other—at the *Latest Concerts;* and got married—at *First Lilacs*,--which is to say, at *Easter*.

THE END.

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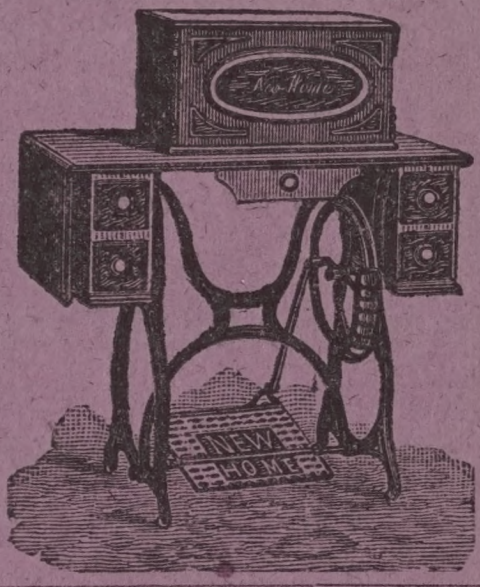

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